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*Wessex Edition*

THE WORKS OF THOMAS HARDY  
IN PROSE AND VERSE  
WITH PREFACES AND NOTES

VERSE

VOL. V

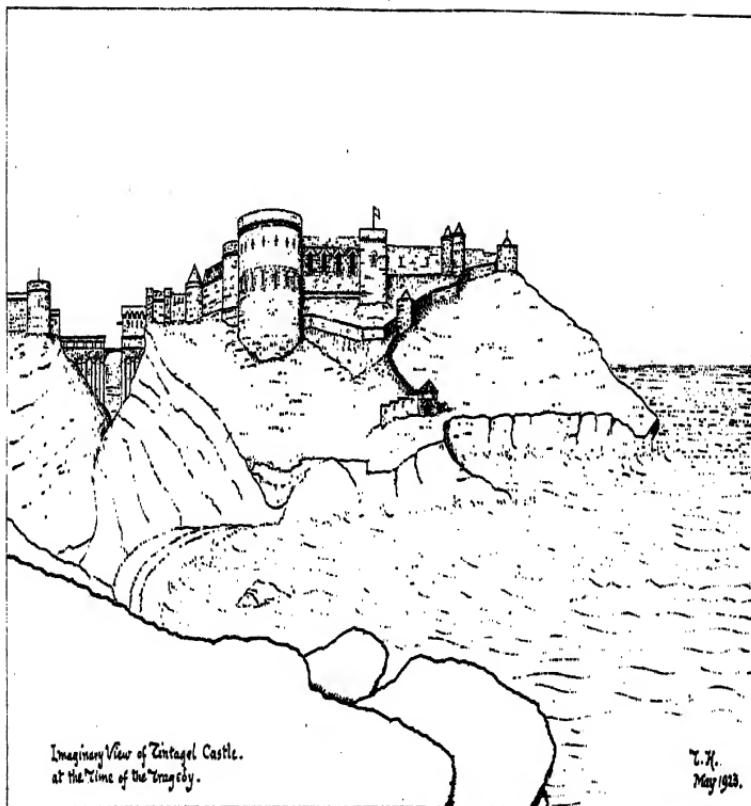


POETICAL WORKS

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER  
WITH MANY OTHER VERSES  
AND  
THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY  
OF THE  
QUEEN OF CORNWALL







Imaginary View of Tintagel Castle.  
at the Time of the Tragedy.

T. H.  
May 1922.

“THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL”

IMAGINARY VIEW OF TINTAGEL CASTLE AT

THE TIME OF THE TRAGEDY

DRAWN BY THE AUTHOR

LATE LYRICS

AND EARLIER

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QUEEN OF CORNWALL

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THOMAS HARDY

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## APOLOGY LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER

ABOUT half the verses that follow were written quite lately. The rest are older, having been held over in MS. when past volumes were published, on considering that these would contain a sufficient number of pages to offer readers at one time, more especially during the distractions of the war. The unusually far back poems to be found here are, however, but some that were overlooked in gathering previous collections. A freshness in them, now unattainable, seemed to make up for their inexperience and to justify their inclusion. A few are dated; the dates of others are not discoverable.

The launching of a volume of this kind in neo-Georgian days by one who began writing in mid-Victorian, and has published nothing to speak of for some years, may seem to call for a few words of excuse or explanation. Whether or no, readers may feel assured that a new book is submitted to them with great hesitation at so belated a date. Insistent practical reasons, however, among which were requests from some illustrious men of letters who are in sympathy with my productions, the accident that several of the poems have already seen the light, and that dozens of them have been lying about for years, compelled the course adopted, in spite of the natural disinclination of a writer whose works have been so frequently

regarded askance by a pragmatic section here and there, to draw attention to them once more.

I do not know that it is necessary to say much on the contents of the book, even in deference to suggestions that will be mentioned presently. I believe that those readers who care for my poems at all—readers to whom no passport is required—will care for this new instalment of them, perhaps the last, as much as for any that have preceded them. Moreover, in the eyes of a less friendly class the pieces, though a very mixed collection indeed, contain, so far as I am able to see, little or nothing in technic or teaching that can be considered a Star-Chamber matter, or so much as agitating to a ladies' school; even though, to use Wordsworth's observation in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, such readers may suppose "that by the act of writing in verse an author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association: that he not only thus apprises the reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded."

It is true, nevertheless, that some grave, positive, stark, delineations are interspersed among those of the passive, lighter, and traditional sort presumably nearer to stereotyped tastes. For—while I am quite aware that a thinker is not expected, and, indeed, is scarcely allowed, now more than heretofore, to state all that crosses his mind concerning existence in this universe, in his attempts to explain or excuse the presence of evil and the incongruity of penalizing the irresponsible—it must be obvious to open intelligences that, without denying the beauty and faithful service of certain venerable cults, such disallowance of "obstinate questionings" and "blank misgivings" tends to a paralysed intellectual stalemate. Heine observed nearly a hundred years ago that the soul has her eternal rights; that she will not be darkened by statutes, nor lullabied by the music of bells. And what is to-day, in allusions

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to the present author's pages, alleged to be "pessimism" is, in truth, only such "questionings" in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also.

If I may be forgiven for quoting my own old words, let me repeat what I printed in this relation more than twenty years ago, and wrote much earlier, in a poem entitled "In Tenebris":

If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst:

that is to say, by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism. But it is called pessimism nevertheless; under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing (though so old as to underlie the Gospel scheme, and even to permeate the Greek drama); and the subject is charitably left to decent silence, as if further comment were needless.

Happily there are some who feel such Levitical passing-by to be, alas, by no means a permanent dismissal of the matter; that comment on where the world stands is very much the reverse of needless in these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century: that amendment and not madness lies that way. And looking down the future these few hold fast to the same: that whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces—unconscious or other—that have "the balancings of the clouds," happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.

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To conclude this question I may add that the argument of the so-called optimists is neatly summarized in a stern pronouncement against me by my friend Mr. Frederic Harrison in a late essay of his, in the words: "This view of life is not mine." The solemn declaration does not seem to me to be so annihilating to the said "view" (really a series of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to co-ordinate) as is complacently assumed. Surely it embodies a too human fallacy quite familiar in logic. Next, a knowing reviewer, apparently a Roman Catholic young man, speaks, with some rather gross instances of the *suggestio falsi* in his whole article, of "Mr. Hardy refusing consolation," the "dark gravity of his ideas," and so on. When a Positivist and a Romanist agree there must be something wonderful in it, which should make a poet sit up. But . . . O that 'twere possible!

I would not have alluded in this place or anywhere else to such casual personal criticisms—for casual and unreflecting they must be—but for the satisfaction of two or three friends in whose opinion a short answer was deemed desirable, on account of the continual repetition of these criticisms, or more precisely, quiz-zings. After all, the serious and truly literary inquiry in this connection is: Should a shaper of such stuff as dreams are made on disregard considerations of what is customary and expected, and apply himself to the real function of poetry, the application of ideas to life (in Matthew Arnold's familiar phrase)? This bears more particularly on what has been called the "philosophy" of these poems—usually reproved as "queer." Whoever the author may be that undertakes such application of ideas in this "philosophic" direction—where it is specially required—glacial judgements must inevitably fall upon him amid opinion whose arbiters largely decry individuality, to whom *ideas* are oddities to smile at, who are moved by a yearning the reverse of that of the Athenian inquirers

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on Mars Hill ; and stiffen their features not only at sound of a new thing, but at a restatement of old things in new terms. Hence should anything of this sort in the following adumbrations seem "queer"—should any of them seem to good Panglossians to embody strange and disrespectful conceptions of this best of all possible worlds, I apologize ; but cannot help it.

Such divergences, which, though piquant for the nonce, it would be affectation to say are not saddening and discouraging likewise, may, to be sure, arise sometimes from superficial aspect only, writer and reader seeing the same thing at different angles. But in palpable cases of divergence they arise, as already said, whenever a serious effort is made towards that which the authority I have cited—who would now be called old-fashioned, possibly even parochial—affirmed to be what no good critic could deny as the poet's province, the application of ideas to life. One might shrewdly guess, by the by, that in such recommendation the famous writer may have overlooked the cold-shouldering results upon an enthusiastic disciple that would be pretty certain to follow his putting the high aim in practice and have forgotten the disconcerting experience of Gil Blas with the Archbishop.

To add a few more words to what has already taken up too many, there is a contingency liable to miscellanies of verse that I have never seen mentioned, so far as I can remember ; I mean the chance little shocks that may be caused over a book of various character like the present and its predecessors by the juxtaposition of unrelated, even discordant, effusions ; poems perhaps years apart in the making, yet facing each other. An odd result of this has been that dramatic anecdotes of a satirical and humorous intention following verse in graver voice, have been read as misfires because they raise the smile that

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they were intended to raise, the journalist, deaf to the sudden change of key, being unconscious that he is laughing with the author and not at him. I admit that I did not foresee such contingencies as I ought to have done, and that people might not perceive when the tone altered. But the difficulties of arranging the themes in a graduated kinship of moods would have been so great that irrelation was almost unavoidable with efforts so diverse. I must trust for right note-catching to those finely-touched spirits who can divine without half a whisper, whose intuitiveness is proof against all the accidents of in consequence. In respect of the less alert, however, should any one's train of thought be thrown out of gear by a consecutive piping of vocal reeds in jarring tonics, without a semiquaver's rest between, and be led thereby to miss the writer's aim and meaning in one out of two contiguous compositions, I shall deeply regret it.

Having at last, I think, finished with the personal points that I was recommended to notice, I will forsake the immediate object of this Preface; and, leaving *Late Lyrics* to whatever fate it deserves, digress for a few moments to more general considerations. The thoughts of any man of letters concerned to keep poetry alive cannot but run uncomfortably on the precarious prospects of English verse at the present day. Verily the hazards and casualties surrounding the birth and setting forth of almost every modern creation in numbers are ominously like those of one of Shelley's paper-boats on a windy lake. And a forward conjecture scarcely permits the hope of a better time, unless men's tendencies should change. So indeed of all art, literature, and "high thinking" nowadays. Whether owing to the barbarizing of taste in the younger minds by the dark madness of the late war, the unabashed cultivation of selfishness in all classes, the plethoric growth of knowledge

simultaneously with the stunting of wisdom, "a degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" (to quote Wordsworth again), or from any other cause, we seem threatened with a new Dark Age.

I formerly thought, like other much exercised writers, that so far as literature was concerned a partial cause might be impotent or mischievous criticism; the satirizing of individuality, the lack of whole-seeing in contemporary estimates of poetry and kindred work, the knowingness affected by junior reviewers, the overgrowth of meticulousness in their peerings for an opinion, as if it were a cultivated habit in them to scrutinize the tool-marks and be blind to the building, to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason, to judge the landscape by a nocturnal exploration with a flash-lantern. In other words, to carry on the old game of sampling the poem or drama by quoting the worst line or worst passage only, in ignorance or not of Coleridge's proof that a versification of any length neither can be nor ought to be all poetry; of reading meanings into a book that its author never dreamt of writing there. I might go on interminably.

But I do not now think any such temporary obstructions to be the cause of the hazard, for these negligences and ignorances, though they may have stifled a few true poets in the run of generations, disperse like stricken leaves before the wind of next week, and are no more heard of again in the region of letters than their writers themselves. No: we may be convinced that something of the deeper sort mentioned must be the cause.

In any event poetry, pure literature in general, religion—I include religion, in its essential and undogmatic sense, because poetry and religion touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing—these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming; even

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though at present, when belief in witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and "the truth that shall make you free," men's minds appear, as above noted, to be moving backwards rather than on. I speak somewhat sweepingly, and should except many thoughtful writers in verse and prose; also men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations, and perhaps in the homely quarter where advance might have been the very least expected a few years back—the English Church—if one reads it rightly as showing evidence of "removing those things that are shaken," in accordance with the wise Epistolary recommendation to the Hebrews. For since the historic and once august hierarchy of Rome some generation ago lost its chance of being the religion of the future by doing otherwise, and throwing over the little band of New Catholics who were making a struggle for continuity by applying the principle of evolution to their own faith, joining hands with modern science, and outflanking the hesitating English instinct towards liturgical restatement (a flank march which I at the time quite expected to witness, with the gathering of many millions of waiting agnostics into its fold); since then, one may ask, what other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, with such strength of old association, such scope for transmutability, such architectural spell, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together? \*

It may indeed be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry—"the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge;

\* However, one must not be too sanguine in reading signs, and since the above was written evidence that the Church will go far in the removal of "things that are shaken" has not been encouraging.

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the impassioned expression of science," as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas. But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so, notwithstanding the supercilious regard of hope by Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, and other philosophers down to Einstein who have my respect. But one dares not prophesy. Physical, chronological, and other contingencies keep me in these days from critical studies and literary circles

Where once we held debate, a band  
Of youthful friends, on mind and art

(if one may quote Tennyson in this century). Hence I cannot know how things are going so well as I used to know them, and the aforesaid limitations must quite prevent my knowing henceforward.

I have to thank the editors and owners of *The Times*, *Fortnightly*, *Mercury*, and other periodicals in which a few of the poems have appeared for kindly assenting to their being reclaimed for collected publication.

T. H.

*February 1922.*



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IMAGINARY VIEW OF TINTAGEL CASTLE AT THE TIME OF  
THE TRAGEDY . . . . . *Frontispiece*

MAP OF THE WESSEX OF THE NOVELS AND POEMS.—  
*End of Volume.*

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER



## WEATHERS

### I

THIS is the weather the cuckoo likes,  
And so do I ;  
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,  
And nestlings fly :  
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,  
And they sit outside at "The Travellers' Rest,"  
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,  
And citizens dream of the south and west,  
And so do I.

### II

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,  
And so do I ;  
When beeches drip in browns and duns,  
And thresh, and ply ;  
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,  
And meadow rivulets overflow,  
And drops on gate-bars hang in a row,  
And rooks in families homeward go,  
And so do I.

## THE MAID OF KEINTON MANDEVILLE

(A TRIBUTE TO SIR H. BISHOP)

I HEAR that maiden still  
Of Keinton Mandeville  
Singing, in flights that played  
As wind-wafts through us all,  
Till they made our mood a thrall  
To their airy rise and fall,  
“Should he upbraid !”

Rose-necked, in sky-gray gown,  
From a stage in Stower Town  
Did she sing, and singing smile  
As she blent that dexterous voice  
With the ditty of her choice,  
And banished our annoys  
Thereawhile.

One with such song had power  
To wing the heaviest hour  
Of him who housed with her.  
Who did I never knew  
When her spoused estate ondrew,  
And her warble flung its woo  
In his ear.

Ah, she's a beldame now,  
Time-trenched on cheek and brow,  
Whom I once heard as a maid  
From Keinton Mandeville  
Of matchless scope and skill  
Sing, with smile and swell and trill,  
“Should he upbraid !”

## SUMMER SCHEMES

WHEN friendly summer calls again,  
Calls again  
Her little fifers to these hills,  
We'll go—we two—to that arched fane  
Of leafage where they prime their bills  
Before they start to flood the plain  
With quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.  
“—We'll go,” I sing; but who shall say  
What may not chance before that day !

And we shall see the waters spring,  
Waters spring  
From chinks the scrubby copses crown ;  
And we shall trace their oncreeping  
To where the cascade tumbles down  
And sends the bobbing growths aswing,  
And ferns not quite but almost drown.  
“—We shall,” I say; but who may sing  
Of what another moon will bring !

## EPEISODIA

### I

PAST the hills that peep  
Where the leaze is smiling,  
On and on beguiling  
Crisply-cropping sheep ;  
Under boughs of brushwood  
Linking tree and tree  
In a shade of lushwood,  
There caressed we !

### II

Hemmed by city walls  
That outshut the sunlight,  
In a foggy dun light,  
Where the footstep falls  
With a pit-pat wearisome  
In its cadency  
On the flagstones drearisome,  
There pressed we !

### III

Where in wild-winged crowds  
Blown birds show their whiteness  
Up against the lightness  
Of the clammy clouds ;  
By the random river  
Pushing to the sea,  
Under bents that quiver,  
There shall rest we.

## FAINTHEART IN A RAILWAY TRAIN

At nine in the morning there passed a church,  
At ten there passed me by the sea,  
At twelve a town of smoke and smirch,  
At two a forest of oak and birch,  
And then, on a platform, she :

A radiant stranger, who saw not me.  
I said, "Get out to her do I dare?"  
But I kept my seat in my search for a plea,  
And the wheels moved on. O could it but be  
That I had alighted there!

## AT MOONRISE AND ONWARDS

I THOUGHT you a fire  
On Heath-Plantation Hill,  
Dealing out mischief the most dire  
To the chattels of men of hire  
There in their vill.

But by and by  
You turned a yellow-green,  
Like a large glow-worm in the sky ;  
And then I could descry  
Your mood and mien.

How well I know  
Your furtive feminine shape !  
As if reluctantly you show  
You nude of cloud, and but by favour throw  
Aside its drape. . . .

—How many a year  
Have you kept pace with me,  
Wan Woman of the waste up there,  
Behind a hedge, or the bare  
Bough of a tree !

No novelty are you,  
O Lady of all my time,  
Veering unbid into my view  
Whether I near Death's mew,  
Or Life's top cyme !

## THE GARDEN SEAT

ITS former green is blue and thin,  
And its once firm legs sink in and in ;  
Soon it will break down unaware,  
Soon it will break down unaware.

At night when reddest flowers are black  
Those who once sat thereon come back ;  
Quite a row of them sitting there,  
Quite a row of them sitting there.

With them the seat does not break down,  
Nor winter freeze them, nor floods drown,  
For they are as light as upper air,  
They are as light as upper air !

## BARTHÉLÉMON AT VAUXHALL

François Hippolite Barthélémon, first-fiddler at Vauxhall Gardens, composed what was probably the most popular morning hymn-tune ever written. It was formerly sung, full-voiced, every Sunday in most churches, to Bishop Ken's words, but is now seldom heard.

HE said : "Awake my soul, and with the sun," . . .  
And paused upon the bridge, his eyes due east,  
Where was emerging like a full-robed priest  
The irradiate globe that vouch'd the dark as done.

It lit his face—the weary face of one  
Who in the adjacent gardens charged his string,  
Nightly, with many a tuneful tender thing,  
Till stars were weak, and dancing hours outrun.

And then were threads of matin music spun  
In trial tones as he pursued his way :  
"This is a morn," he murmured, "well begun :  
This strain to Ken will count when I am clay!"

And count it did ; till, caught by echoing lyres,  
It spread to galleried naves and mighty quires.

## “I SOMETIMES THINK”

(FOR F. E. H.)

I SOMETIMES think as here I sit  
    Of things I have done,  
Which seemed in doing not unfit  
    To face the sun :  
Yet never a soul has paused a whit  
    On such—not one.

There was that eager strenuous press  
    To sow good seed ;  
There was that saving from distress  
    In the nick of need ;  
There were those words in the wilderness :  
    Who cared to heed ?

Yet can this be full true, or no ?  
    For one did care,  
And, spiriting into my house, to, fro,  
    Like wind on the stair,  
Cares still, heeds all, and will, even though  
    I may despair.

## JEZREEL

ON ITS SEIZURE BY THE ENGLISH UNDER ALLENBY,  
SEPTEMBER 1918

DID they catch as it were in a Vision at shut of the day—  
When their cavalry smote through the ancient Esdraelon Plain,  
And they crossed where the Tishbite stood forth in his enemy's way—  
His gaunt mournful Shade as he bade the King haste off amain?

On war-men at this end of time—even on Englishmen's eyes—  
Who slay with their arms of new might in that long-ago place,  
Flashed he who drove furiously? . . . Ah, did the phantom arise  
Of that queen, of that proud Tyrian woman who painted her face?

Faintly marked they the words "Throw her down!" rise from Night eerily,  
Spectre-spots of the blood of her body on some rotten wall?  
And the thin note of pity that came: "A King's daughter is she,"  
As they passed where she trodden was once by the chargers' footfall?

## JEZREEL

Could such be the hauntings of men of to-day, at the  
cease  
Of pursuit, at the dusk-hour, ere slumber their senses  
could seal?  
Enghosted seers, kings—one on horseback who asked  
“ Is it peace? ” . . .  
Yea, strange things and spectral may men have beheld  
in Jezreel!

*September 24, 1918.*

## A JOG-TROT PAIR

Who were the twain that trod this track  
So many times together  
Hither and back,  
In spells of certain and uncertain weather?

Commonplace in conduct they  
Who wandered to and fro here  
Day by day:  
Two that few dwellers troubled themselves to know here.

The very gravel-path was prim  
That daily they would follow:  
Borders trim:  
Never a wayward sprout, or hump, or hollow.

Trite usages in tamest style  
Had tended to their plighting.  
"It's just worth while,  
Perhaps," they had said. "And saves much sad good-nighting."

And petty seemed the happenings  
That ministered to their joyance:  
Simple things,  
Onerous to satiate souls, increased their buoyance.

Who could those common people be,  
Of days the plainest, barest?  
They were we;  
Yes; happier than the cleverest, smartest, rarest.

## “THE CURTAINS NOW ARE DRAWN”

(SONG)

### I

THE curtains now are drawn,  
And the spindrift strikes the glass,  
Blown up the jaggèd pass  
By the surly salt sou'-west,  
And the sneering glare is gone  
Behind the yonder crest,

While she sings to me :

“O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine.”

### II

I stand here in the rain,  
With its smite upon her stone,  
And the grasses that have grown  
Over women, children, men,  
And their texts that “Life is vain” ;  
But I hear the notes as when

Once she sang to me :

“O the dream that thou art my Love, be it thine,  
And the dream that I am thy Love, be it mine,  
And death may come, but loving is divine.”

## “ACCORDING TO THE MIGHTY WORKING”

### I

WHEN moiling seems at cease  
    In the vague void of night-time,  
And heaven's wide roomage stormless  
    Between the dusk and light-time,  
    And fear at last is formless,  
We call the allurement Peace.

### II

Peace, this hid riot, Change,  
    This revel of quick-cued mumming,  
This never truly being,  
    This evermore becoming,  
    This spinner's wheel onfleeing  
Outside perception's range.

1917.

## “ I WAS NOT HE ”

(SONG)

I was not he—the man  
Who used to pilgrim to your gate,  
At whose smart step you grew elate,  
And rosed, as maidens can,  
For a brief span.

It was not I who sang  
Beside the keys you touched so true  
With note-bent eyes, as if with you  
It counted not whence sprang  
The voice that rang. . . .

Yet though my destiny  
It was to miss your early sweet,  
You still, when turned to you my feet,  
Had sweet enough to be  
A prize for me!

## THE WEST-OF-WESSEX GIRL

A **VERY** West-of-Wessex girl  
As blithe as blithe could be,  
Was once well-known to me,  
And she would laud her native town,  
And hope and hope that we  
Might sometime study up and down  
Its charms in company.

But never I squired my Wessex girl  
In jaunts to Hoe or street  
When hearts were high in beat,  
Nor saw her in the marbled ways  
Where market-people meet  
That in her bounding early days  
Were friendly with her feet.

Yet now my West-of-Wessex girl,  
When midnight hammers slow  
From Andrew's, blow by blow,  
As phantom draws me by the hand  
To the place—Plymouth Hoe—  
Where side by side in life, as planned,  
We never were to go!

Begun in Plymouth,  
*March 1913.*

## WELCOME HOME

BACK to my native place  
Bent upon returning,  
Bosom all day burning  
To be where my race  
Well were known, 'twas keen with me  
There to dwell in amity.

Folk had sought their beds,  
But I hailed : to view me  
Under the moon, out to me  
Several pushed their heads,  
And to each I told my name,  
Plans, and that therefrom I came.

“ Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true  
Said they, back a long time,  
Here had spent his young time,  
Some such man as you . . .  
Good-night.” The casement closed again,  
And I was left in the frosty lane.

## GOING AND STAYING

### I

THE moving sun-shapes on the spray,  
The sparkles where the brook was flowing,  
Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,  
These were the things we wished would stay ;  
But they were going.

### II

Seasons of blankness as of snow,  
The silent bleed of a world decaying,  
The moan of multitudes in woe,  
These were the things we wished would go ;  
But they were staying.

### III

Then we looked closer at Time,  
And saw his ghostly arms revolving  
To sweep off woeful things with prime,  
Things sinister with things sublime  
Alike dissolving.

## READ BY MOONLIGHT

I PAUSED to read a letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine,  
Eyeing it in the tenderest way,  
And edging it up to catch each ray  
Upon her light-penned line.

I did not know what years would flow  
Of her life's span and mine  
Ere I read another letter of hers  
By the moon's cold shine!

I chance now on the last of hers,  
By the moon's cold shine ;  
It is the one remaining page  
Out of the many shallow and sage  
Whereto she set her sign.  
Who could foresee there were to be  
Such missives of pain and pine  
Ere I should read this last of hers  
By the moon's cold shine !

## AT A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD

SOMETIMES THE DWELLING OF JOHN KEATS

O POET, come you haunting here  
Where streets have stolen up all around,  
And never a nightingale pours one  
Full-throated sound?

Drawn from your drowse by the Seven famed Hills,  
Thought you to find all just the same  
Here shining, as in hours of old,  
If you but came?

What will you do in your surprise  
At seeing that changes wrought in Rome  
Are wrought yet more on the misty slope  
One time your home?

Will you wake wind-wafts on these stairs?  
 Swing the doors open noisily?  
 Show as an umbraged ghost beside  
 Your ancient tree?

Or will you, softening, the while  
 You further and yet further look,  
 Learn that a laggard few would fain  
 Preserve your nook? . . .

—Where the Piazza steps incline,  
 And catch late light at eventide,  
 I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,  
 “ ‘Twas here he died.”

## AT A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,  
Where day and night a pyramid keeps  
Uplifted its white hand, and said,  
" 'Tis there he sleeps."

Pleasanter now it is to hold  
That here, where sang he, more of him  
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,  
Passed to the dim.

*July 1920.*

## A WOMAN'S FANCY

"Ah, Madam ; you've indeed come back here?  
'Twas sad—your husband's so swift death,  
And you away! You shouldn't have left him :  
It hastened his last breath."

"Dame, I am not the lady you think me ;  
I know not her, nor know her name ;  
I've come to lodge here—a friendless woman ;  
My health my only aim."

She came ; she lodged. Wherever she rambled  
They held her as no other than  
The lady named ; and told how her husband  
Had died a forsaken man.

So often did they call her thuswise  
Mistakenly, by that man's name,  
So much did they declare about him,  
That his past form and fame

Grew on her, till she pitied his sorrow  
As if she truly had been the cause—  
Yea, his deserter ; and came to wonder  
What mould of man he was.

"Tell me my history!" would exclaim she ;  
"*Our* history," she said mournfully.  
"But *you* know, surely, Ma'am?" they would answer,  
Much in perplexity.

## A WOMAN'S FANCY

Curious, she crept to his grave one evening,  
And a second time in the dusk of the morrow ;  
Then a third time, with crescent emotion  
Like a bereaved wife's sorrow.

No gravestone rose by the rounded hillock ;  
—“I marvel why this is ?” she said.  
—“He had no kindred, Ma'am, but you near.”  
—She set a stone at his head.

She learnt to dream of him, and told them :  
“In slumber often uprises he,  
And says : ‘I am joyed that, after all, Dear,  
You've not deserted me !’”

At length died too this kinless woman,  
As he had died she had grown to crave ;  
And at her dying she besought them  
To bury her in his grave.

Such said, she had paused ; until she added :  
“Call me by his name on the stone,  
As I were, first to last, his dearest,  
Not she who left him lone !”

And this they did. And so it became there  
That, by the strength of a tender whim,  
The stranger was she who bore his name there,  
Not she who wedded him.

## HER SONG

sang that song on Sunday,  
To witch an idle while,  
sang that song on Monday,  
As fittest to beguile ;  
sang it as the year outwore,  
And the new slid in ;  
thought not what might shape before  
Another would begin.

sang that song in summer,  
All unforeknowingly,  
'o him as a new-comer  
From regions strange to me :  
sang it when in afteryears  
The shades stretched out,  
And paths were faint ; and flocking fears  
Brought cup-eyed care and doubt.

Sings he that song on Sundays  
In some dim land afar,  
On Saturdays, or Mondays,  
As when the evening star  
Glimpsed in upon his bending face  
And my hanging hair,  
And time untouched me with a trace  
Of soul-smart or despair ?

## A WET AUGUST

NINE drops of water bead the jessamine,  
And nine-and-ninety smear the stones and tiles :  
—'Twas not so in that August—full-rayed, fine—  
When we lived out-of-doors, sang songs, strode miles.

Or was there then no noted radiancy  
Of summer? Were dun clouds, a dribbling bough,  
Gilt over by the light I bore in me,  
And was the waste world just the same as now?

It can have been so: yea, that threatenings  
Of coming down-drip on the sunless gray,  
By the then golden chances seen in things  
Were wrought more bright than brightest skies to-day.

## THE DISSEMBLERS

“ It was not you I came to please,  
Only myself,” flipped she ;  
“ I like this spot of phantasies,  
And thought you far from me.”  
But O, he was the secret spell  
That led her to the lea !

“ It was not she who shaped my ways,  
Or works, or thoughts,” he said.  
“ I scarcely marked her living days,  
Or missed her much when dead.”  
But O, his joyance knew its knell  
When daisies hid her head !

## TO A LADY PLAYING AND SINGING IN THE MORNING

JOYFUL lady, sing!  
And I will lurk here listening,  
Though nought be done, and nought begun,  
And work-hours swift are scurrying.

Sing, O lady, still!  
Aye, I will wait each note you trill,  
Though duties due that press to do  
This whole day long I unfulfil.

“—It is an evening tune;  
One not designed to waste the noon,”  
You say. I know: time bids me go—  
For daytide passes too, too soon!

But let indulgence be,  
This once, to my rash ecstasy:  
When sounds nowhere that carolled air  
My idled morn may comfort me!

## “A MAN WAS DRAWING NEAR TO ME”

ON that gray night of mournful drone,  
Apart from aught to hear, to see,  
I dreamt not that from shires unknown  
    In gloom, alone,  
    By Halworthy,  
A man was drawing near to me.

I'd no concern at anything,  
No sense of coming pull-heart play ;  
Yet, under the silent outspreading  
    Of even's wing  
    Where Otterham lay,  
A man was riding up my way.

I thought of nobody—not of one,  
But only of trifles—legends, ghosts—  
Though, on the moorland dim and dun  
    That travellers shun  
    About these coasts,  
The man had passed Tresparret Posts.

There was no light at all inland,  
Only the seaward pharos-fire,  
Nothing to let me understand  
    That hard at hand  
    By Hennett Byre  
The man was getting nigh and nigher.

There was a rumble at the door,  
A draught disturbed the drapery,  
And but a minute passed before,  
    With gaze that bore  
    My destiny,  
The man revealed himself to me.

## THE STRANGE HOUSE

(MAX GATE, A.D. 2000)

“ I HEAR the piano playing—

Just as a ghost might play.”

“ —O, but what are you saying ?

There's no piano to-day ;

Their old one was sold and broken ;

Years past it went amiss.”

“ —I heard it, or shouldn't have spoken :

A strange house, this !

“ I catch some undertone here,

From some one out of sight.”

“ —Impossible ; we are alone here,

And shall be through the night.”

“ —The parlour-door—what stirred it ? ”

“ —No one : no soul's in range.”

“ —But, anyhow, I heard it,

And it seems strange !

“ Seek my own room I cannot—

A figure is on the stair ! ”

“ —What figure ? Nay, I scan not

Any one lingering there.

A bough outside is waving,

And that's its shade by the moon.

“ —Well, all is strange ! I am craving

Strength to leave soon.”

“ —Ah, maybe you've some vision

Of showings beyond our sphere ;

Some sight, sense, intuition

Of what once happened here ?

## THE STRANGE HOUSE

The house is old ; they've hinted  
It once held two love-thralls,  
And they may have imprinted  
Their dreams on its walls ?

“ They were—I think 'twas told me—  
Queer in their works and ways ;  
The teller would often hold me  
With weird tales of those days.  
Some folk can not abide here,  
But we—we do not care  
Who loved, laughed, wept, or died here,  
Knew joy, or despair.”

## “AS 'TWERE TO-NIGHT”

(SONG)

As 'twere to-night, in the brief space  
Of a far eventime,  
My spirit rang achime  
At vision of a girl of grace ;  
As 'twere to-night, in the brief space  
Of a far eventime.

As 'twere at noontide of to-morrow  
I airily walked and talked,  
And wondered as I walked  
What it could mean, this soar from sorrow ;  
As 'twere at noontide of to-morrow  
I airily walked and talked.

As 'twere at waning of this week  
Broke a new life on me ;  
Trancings of bliss to be  
In some dim dear land soon to seek ;  
As 'twere at waning of this week  
Broke a new life on me !

## THE CONTRETEMPS

A FORWARD rush by the lamp in the gloom,  
And we clasped, and almost kissed ;  
But she was not the woman whom  
I had promised to meet in the thawing brume  
On that harbour-bridge ; nor was I he of her tryst.

So loosening from me swift she said :  
“ O why, why feign to be  
The one I had meant !—to whom I have sped  
To fly with, being so sorrily wed ! ”  
—’Twas thus and thus that she upbraided me.

My assignation had struck upon  
Some others' like it, I found.  
And her lover rose on the night anon ;  
And then her husband entered on  
The lamplit, snowflaked, sloppiness around.

“ Take her and welcome, man ! ” he cried :  
“ I wash my hands of her.  
I'll find me twice as good a bride ! ”  
—All this to me, whom he had eyed,  
Plainly, as his wife's planned deliverer.

And next the lover : “ Little I knew,  
Madam, you had a third !  
Kissing here in my very view ! ”  
—Husband and lover then withdrew.  
I let them ; and I told them not they erred.

## THE CONTRETEMPS

Why not? Well, there faced she and I—  
Two strangers who'd kissed, or near,  
Chancewise. To see stand weeping by  
A woman once embraced, will try  
The tension of a man the most austere.

So it began ; and I was young,  
She pretty, by the lamp,  
As flakes came waltzing down among  
The waves of her clinging hair, that hung  
Heavily on her temples, dark and damp.

And there alone still stood we two ;  
She one cast off for me,  
Or so it seemed : while night ondrew,  
Forcing a parley what should do  
We twain hearts caught in one catastrophe.

In stranded souls a common strait  
Wakes latencies unknown,  
Whose impulse may precipitate  
A life-long leap. The hour was late,  
And there was the Jersey boat with its funnel agroan.

“ Is wary walking worth much bother ? ”  
It grunted, as still it stayed.  
“ One pairing is as good as another  
Where all is venture! Take each other,  
And scrap the oaths that you have aforetime made.” . . .

—Of the four involved there walks but one  
On earth at this late day.  
And what of the chapter so begun ?  
In that odd complex what was done ?  
Well ; happiness comes in full to none :  
Let peace lie on lulled lips : I will not say.

A GENTLEMAN'S EPITAPH ON HIMSELF  
AND A LADY, WHO WERE BURIED  
TOGETHER

I DWELT in the shade of a city,  
She far by the sea,  
With folk perhaps good, gracious, witty ;  
But never with me.

Her form on the ballroom's smooth flooring  
I never once met,  
To guide her with accents adoring  
Through Weippert's "First Set."<sup>1</sup>

I spent my life's seasons with pale ones  
In Vanity Fair,  
And she enjoyed hers among hale ones  
In salt-smelling air.

Maybe she had eyes of deep colour,  
Maybe they were blue,  
Maybe as she aged they got duller ;  
That never I knew.

She may have had lips like the coral,  
But I never kissed them,  
Saw pouting, nor curling in quarrel,  
Nor sought for, nor missed them.

<sup>1</sup> Quadrilles danced early in the nineteenth century.

## A GENTLEMAN'S EPITAPH

Not a word passed of love all our lifetime,  
Between us, nor thrill;  
We'd never a husband-and-wife time,  
For good or for ill.

Yet as one dust, through bleak days and vernal,  
Lie I and lies she,  
This never-known lady, eternal  
Companion to me!

## THE OLD GOWN

(SONG)

I HAVE seen her in gowns the brightest,  
Of azure, green, and red,  
And in the simplest, whitest,  
Muslined from heel to head ;  
I have watched her walking, riding,  
Shade-flecked by a leafy tree,  
Or in fixed thought abiding  
By the foam-fingered sea.

In woodlands I have known her,  
When boughs were mourning loud,  
In the rain-reek she has shown her  
Wild-haired and watery-browed.  
And once or twice she has cast me  
As she pomped along the street  
Court-clad, ere quite she had passed me,  
A glance from her chariot-seat.

But in my memoried passion  
For evermore stands she  
In the gown of fading fashion  
She wore that night when we,  
Doomed long to part, assembled  
In the snug small room ; yea, when  
She sang with lips that trembled,  
“ Shall I see his face again ? ”

## A NIGHT IN NOVEMBER

I MARKED when the weather changed,  
And the panes began to quake,  
And the winds rose up and ranged,  
That night, lying half-awake.

Dead leaves blew into my room,  
And alighted upon my bed,  
And a tree declared to the gloom  
Its sorrow that they were shed.

One leaf of them touched my hand,  
And I thought that it was you  
There stood as you used to stand,  
And saying at last you knew !

(?) 1913.

## A DUETTIST TO HER PIANOFORTE

### SONG OF SILENCE

(E. L. H.—H. C. H.)

SINCE every sound moves memories,  
How can I play you  
Just as I might if you raised no scene,  
By your ivory rows, of a form between  
My vision and your time-worn sheen,  
As when each day you  
Answered our fingers with ecstasy ?  
So it's hushed, hushed, hushed, you are for me !

And as I am doomed to counterchord  
Her notes no more  
In those old things I used to know,  
In a fashion, when we practised so,  
"Good-night!—Good-bye!" to your pleated show  
Of silk, now hoar,  
Each nodding hammer, and pedal and key,  
For dead, dead, dead, you are to me !

I fain would second her, strike to her stroke,  
As when she was by,  
Aye, even from the ancient clamorous "Fall  
Of Paris," or "Battle of Prague" withal,  
To the "Roving Minstrels," or "Elfin Call"  
Sung soft as a sigh :  
But upping ghosts press achesfully  
And mute, mute, mute, you are for me !

## A DUETTIST TO HER PIANOFORTE

Should I fling your polyphones, plaints, and quavers  
    Afresh on the air,  
Too quick would the small white shapes be here  
Of the fellow twain of hands so dear ;  
And a black-tressed profile, and pale smooth ear ;  
    —Then how shall I bear  
Such heavily-haunted harmony ?  
Nay : hushed, hushed, hushed, you are for me !

## “WHERE THREE ROADS JOINED”

WHERE three roads joined it was green and fair,  
And over a gate was the sun-glazed sea,  
And life laughed sweet when I halted there ;  
Yet there I never again would be.

I am sure those branchways are brooding now,  
With a wistful blankness upon their face,  
While the few mute passengers notice how  
Spectre-beridden is the place ;

Which nightly sighs like a laden soul,  
And grieves that a pair, in bliss for a spell  
Not far from thence, should have let it roll  
Away from them down a plumbless well

While the phasm of him who fared starts up,  
And of her who was waiting him sobs from near  
As they haunt there and drink the wormwood cup  
They filled for themselves when their sky was clear.

Yes, I see those roads—now rutted and bare,  
While over the gate is no sun-glazed sea ;  
And though life laughed when I halted there,  
It is where I never again would be.

## “AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM”

(ON THE SIGNING OF THE ARMISTICE, NOV. 11, 1918)

### I

THERE had been years of Passion—scorching, cold,  
And much Despair, and Anger heaving high,  
Care whitely watching, Sorrows manifold,  
Among the young, among the weak and old,  
And the pensive Spirit of Pity whispered, “Why?”

### II

Men had not paused to answer. Foes distraught  
Pierced the thinned peoples in a brute-like blindness,  
Philosophies that sages long had taught,  
And Selflessness, were as an unknown thought,  
And “Hell!” and “Shell!” were yapped at Loving-kindness.

### III

The feeble folk at home had grown full-used  
To “dug-outs,” “snipers,” “Huns,” from the war-adept  
In the mornings heard, and at evetides perused;  
To day-dreamt men in millions, when they mused—  
To nightmare-men in millions when they slept.

### IV

Waking to wish existence timeless, null,  
Sirius they watched above where armies fell;  
He seemed to check his flapping when, in the lull  
Of night a boom came thencewise, like the dull  
Plunge of a stone dropped into some deep well.

## “AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM”

### V

So, when old hopes that earth was bettering slowly  
Were dead and damned, there sounded “War is done!”  
One morrow. Said the bereft, and meek, and lowly,  
“Will men some day be given to grace? yea, wholly,  
And in good sooth, as our dreams used to run?”

### VI

Breathless they paused. Out there men raised their  
glance  
To where had stood those poplars lank and lopped,  
As they had raised it through the four years' dance  
Of Death in the now familiar flats of France;  
And murmured, “Strange, this! How? All firing  
stopped?”

### VII

Aye; all was hushed. The about-to-fire fired not,  
The aimed-at moved away in trance-lipped song.  
One checkless regiment slung a clinching shot  
And turned. The Spirit of Irony smirked out,  
“What?  
Spoil peradventures woven of Rage and Wrong?”

### VIII

Thenceforth no flying fires inflamed the gray,  
No hurtlings shook the dewdrop from the thorn,  
No moan perplexed the mute bird on the spray;  
Worn horses mused: “We are not whipped to-day”;  
No west-winged engines blurred the moon's thin horn.

### IX

Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a clemency;  
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;  
Some could, some could not, shake off misery:  
The Sinister Spirit sneered: “It had to be!”  
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, “Why?”

## HAUNTING FINGERS

A PHANTASY IN A MUSEUM OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

“ ARE you awake,  
Comrades, this silent night?  
Well 'twere if all of our glossy gluey make  
Lay in the damp without, and fell to fragments quite !”

“ O viol, my friend,  
I watch, though Phosphor nears,  
And I fain would drowse away to its utter end  
This dumb dark stowage after our loud melodious  
years !”

And they felt past handlers clutch them,  
Though none was in the room,  
Old players' dead fingers touch them,  
Shrunk in the tomb.

“ 'Cello, good mate,  
You speak my mind as yours :  
Doomed to this voiceless, crippled, corpselike state,  
Who, dear to famed Amphion, trapped here, long  
endures ?”

“ Once I could thrill  
The populace through and through,  
Wake them to passioned pulsings past their will.” . . .  
(A contra-basso spake so, and the rest sighed anew.)

## HAUNTING FINGERS

And they felt old muscles travel  
Over their tense contours,  
And with long skill unravel  
Cunningest scores.

“The tender pat  
Of her airy finger-tips  
Upon me daily—I rejoiced thereat !”  
(Thuswise a harpsicord, as 'twere from dampered lips.)

“My keys' white shine,  
Now sallow, met a hand  
Even whiter. . . . Tones of hers fell forth with  
mine  
In sowings of sound so sweet no lover could with-  
stand !”

And its clavier was filmed with fingers  
Like tapering flames—wan, cold—  
Or the nebulous light that lingers  
In charnel mould.

“Gayer than most  
Was I,” reverbed a drum;  
“The regiments, marchings, throngs, hurrahs!  
What a host  
I stirred—even when crape muffleings gagged me well-  
nigh dumb !”

Trilled an aged viol :  
“Much tune have I set free  
To spur the dance, since my first timid trial  
Where I had birth—far hence, in sun-swept Italy !”

And he feels apt touches on him  
From those that pressed him then ;  
Who seem with their glance to con him,  
Saying, “Not again !”

## HAUNTING FINGERS

“A holy calm,”  
Mourned a shawm’s voice subdued,  
“Steeped my Cecilian rhythms when hymn and  
psalm  
Poured from devout souls met in Sabbath sanctitude.”

“I faced the sock  
Nightly,” twanged a sick lyre,  
“Over ranked lights! O charm of life in mock,  
O scenes that fed love, hope, wit, rapture, mirth,  
desire!”

Thus they, till each past player  
Stroked thinner and more thin,  
And the morning sky grew grayer,  
And day crawled in.

## THE WOMAN I MET

A STRANGER, I threaded sunken-hearted  
    A lamp-lit crowd ;  
And anon there passed me a soul departed,  
    Who mutely bowed.  
In my far-off youthful years I had met her,  
Full-pulsed ; but now, no more life's debtor,  
    Onward she slid  
        In a shroud that furs half-hid.

“ Why do you trouble me, dead woman,  
    Trouble me ;  
You whom I knew when warm and human ?  
    —How it be  
That you quitted earth and are yet upon it  
Is, to any who ponder on it,  
    Past being read ! ”  
“ Still, it is so,” she said.

“ These were my haunts in my olden sprightly  
    Hours of breath ;  
Here I went tempting frail youth nightly  
    To their death ;  
But you deemed me chaste—me, a tinselled sinner !  
How thought you one with pureness in her  
    Could pace this street  
        Eyeing some man to greet ?

“ Well ; your very simplicity made me love you  
    Mid such town dross,  
Till I set not Heaven itself above you,  
    Who grew my Cross ;

## THE WOMAN I MET

For you'd only nod, despite how I sighed for you ;  
So you tortured me, who fain would have died for you !  
—What I suffered then  
Would have paid for the sins of ten !

“ Thus went the days. I feared you despised me  
To fling me a nod  
Each time, no more : till love chastised me  
As with a rod  
That a fresh bland boy of no assurance  
Should fire me with passion beyond endurance,  
While others all  
I hated, and loathed their call.

“ I said : ‘ It is his mother's spirit  
Hovering around  
To shield him, maybe ! ’ I used to fear it,  
As still I found  
My beauty left no least impression,  
And remnants of pride withheld confession  
Of my true trade  
By speaking ; so I delayed.

“ I said : ‘ Perhaps with a costly flower  
He'll be beguiled.’  
I held it, in passing you one late hour,  
To your face : you smiled,  
Keeping step with the throng ; though you did not see  
there  
A single one that rivalled me there ! . . .  
Well : it's all past.  
I died in the Lock at last.”

So walked the dead and I together  
The quick among,  
Elbowing our kind of every feather  
Slowly and long ;

## THE WOMAN I MET

Yea, long and slowly. That a phantom should stalk  
there  
With me seemed nothing strange, and talk there  
That winter night  
By flaming jets of light.

She showed me Juans who feared their call-time,  
    Guessing their lot ;  
She showed me her sort that cursed their fall-time,  
    And that did not.  
Till suddenly murmured she : " Now, tell me,  
Why asked you never, ere death befell me,  
    To have my love,  
Much as I dreamt thereof?"

I could not answer. And she, well weeting  
    All in my heart,  
Said : " God your guardian kept our fleeting  
    Forms apart ! "  
Sighing and drawing her furs around her  
Over the shroud that tightly bound her,  
    With wafts as from clay  
She turned and thinned away.

LONDON, 1918.

## “IF IT'S EVER SPRING AGAIN”

(SONG)

If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I when  
Down the moor-cock splashed, and hen,  
Seeing me not, amid their flounder,  
Standing with my arm around her ;  
If it's ever spring again,  
Spring again,  
I shall go where went I then.

If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay crop at the prime,  
And the cuckoos—two—in rhyme,  
As they used to be, or seemed to,  
We shall do as long we've dreamed to,  
If it's ever summer-time,  
Summer-time,  
With the hay, and bees achime.

## THE TWO HOUSES

IN the heart of night,  
When farers were not near,  
The left house said to the house on the right,  
"I have marked your rise, O smart newcomer here."

Said the right, cold-eyed :  
"Newcomer here I am,  
Hence halter than you with your cracked old hide,  
Loose casements, wormy beams, and doors that jam.

"Modern my wood,  
My hangings fair of hue ;  
While my windows open as they should,  
And water-pipes thread all my chambers through.

"Your gear is gray,  
Your face wears furrows untold."  
"—Yours might," mourned the other, "if you held,  
brother,  
The Presences from aforetime that I hold.

"You have not known  
Men's lives, deaths, toils, and teens ;  
You are but a heap of stick and stone :  
A new house has no sense of the have-beens.

"Void as a drum  
You stand : I am packed with these,  
Though, strangely, living dwellers who come  
See not the phantoms all my substance sees !

## THE TWO HOUSES

“Visible in the morning  
Stand they, when dawn drags in ;  
Visible at night ; yet hint or warning  
Of these thin elbowers few of the inmates win.

“Babes new-brought-forth  
Obsess my rooms ; straight-stretched  
Lank corpses, ere outborne to earth ;  
Yea, throng they as when first from the 'Byss up-  
fetched.

“Dancers and singers  
Throb in me now as once ;  
Rich-noted throats and gossamered flingers  
Of heels ; the learned in love-lore and the dunce.

“Note here within  
The bridegroom and the bride,  
Who smile and greet their friends and kin,  
And down my stairs depart for tracks untried.

“Where such inbe,  
A dwelling's character  
Takes theirs, and a vague semblancy  
To them in all its limbs, and light, and atmosphere.

“Yet the blind folk  
My tenants, who come and go  
In the flesh mid these, with souls unwoke,  
Of such sylph-like surrounders do not know.”

“—Will the day come,”  
Said the new one, awestruck, faint,  
“When I shall lodge shades dim and dumb—  
And with such spectral guests become acquaint ?”

“—That will it, boy ;  
Such shades will people thee,  
Each in his misery, irk, or joy,  
And print on thee their presences as on me.”

## ON STINSFORD HILL AT MIDNIGHT

I GLIMPSED a woman's muslined form  
Sing-songing airily  
Against the moon ; and still she sang,  
And took no heed of me.

Another trice, and I beheld  
What first I had not scanned,  
That now and then she tapped and shook  
A timbrel in her hand.

So late the hour, so white her drape,  
So strange the look it lent  
To that blank hill, I could not guess  
What phantastry it meant.

Then burst I forth : "Why such from you ?  
Are you so happy now ?"  
Her voice swam on ; nor did she show  
Thought of me anyhow.

I called again : "Come nearer ; much  
That kind of note I need !"  
The song kept softening, loudening on,  
In placid calm unheed.

"What home is yours now ?" then I said ;  
"You seem to have no care."  
But the wild wavering tune went forth  
As if I had not been there.

## ON STINSFORD HILL AT MIDNIGHT

“ This world is dark, and where you are,”  
I said, “ I cannot be!”  
But still the happy one sang on,  
And had no heed of me.

NOTE.—It was said that she belonged to a body of religious enthusiasts.

## THE FALLOW DEER AT THE LONELY HOUSE

One without looks in to-night  
Through the curtain-chink  
From the sheet of glistening white ;  
One without looks in to-night  
As we sit and think  
By the fender-brink.

We do not discern those eyes  
Watching in the snow ;  
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes  
We do not discern those eyes  
Wondering, aglow,  
Fourfooted, tiptoe.

## THE SELFSAME SONG

A BIRD sings the selfsame song,  
With never a fault in its flow,  
That we listened to here those long  
Long years ago.

A pleasing marvel is how  
A strain of such rapturous rote  
Should have gone on thus till now  
Unchanged in a note!

—But it's not the selfsame bird.—  
No : perished to dust is he. . . .  
As also are those who heard  
That song with me.

## THE WANDERER

THERE is nobody on the road  
    But I,  
And no beseeming abode  
    I can try  
For shelter, so abroad  
    I must lie.

The stars feel not far up,  
    And to be  
The lights by which I sup  
    Glimmeringly,  
Set out in a hollow cup  
    Over me.

They wag as though they were  
    Panting for joy  
Where they shine, above all care,  
    And annoy,  
And demons of despair—  
    Life's alloy.

Sometimes outside the fence  
    Feet swing past,  
Clock-like, and then go hence,  
    Till at last  
There is a silence, dense,  
    Deep, and vast.

A wanderer, witch-drawn  
    To and fro,  
To-morrow, at the dawn,  
    On I go,  
And where I rest anon  
    Do not know !

## THE WANDERER

Yet it's meet—this bed of hay  
    And roofless plight;  
For there's a house of clay,  
    My own, quite,  
To roof me soon, all day  
    And all night.

## A WIFE COMES BACK

THIS is the story a man told me  
Of his life's one day of dreamery.

A woman came into his room  
Between the dawn and the creeping day :  
She was the years-wed wife from whom  
He had parted, and who lived far away,  
As if strangers they.

He wondered, and as she stood  
She put on youth in her look and air,  
And more was he wonderstruck as he viewed  
Her form and flesh bloom yet more fair  
While he watched her there ;

Till she freshed to the pink and brown  
That were hers on the night when first they met,  
When she was the charm of the idle town,  
And he the pick of the club-fire set. . . .  
His eyes grew wet,

And he stretched his arms : "Stay—rest!—"  
He cried. "Abide with me so, my own!"  
But his arms closed in on his hard bare breast ;  
She had vanished with all he had looked upon  
Of her beauty : gone.

## A WIFE COMES BACK

He clothed, and drew downstairs,  
But she was not in the house, he found ;  
And he passed out under the leafy pairs  
Of the avenue elms, and searched around  
To the park-pale bound.

He mounted, and rode till night  
To the city to which she had long withdrawn,  
The vision he bore all day in his sight  
Being her young self as pondered on  
In the dim of dawn.

“—The lady here long ago—  
Is she now here?—young—or such age as she is?”  
“—She is still here.”—“Thank God. Let her know;  
She’ll pardon a comer so late as this  
Whom she’d fain not miss.”

She received him—an ancient dame,  
Who hemmed, with features frozen and numb,  
“ How strange!—I’d almost forgotten your name!—  
A call just now—is troublesome;  
Why did you come?”

## YOUNG MAN'S EXHORTATION

CALL off your eyes from care  
some determined deftness ; put forth joys  
as excess without the core that cloyes,  
And charm Life's lourings fair.

Exalt and crown the hour  
at girdles us, and fill it full with glee,  
nd glee, excelling aught could ever be  
Were heedfulness in power.

Send up such touching strains  
at limitless recruits from Fancy's pack  
all rush upon your tongue, and tender back  
All that your soul contains.

For what do we know best ?  
at a fresh love-leaf crumpled soon will dry,  
id that men moment after moment die,  
Of all scope dispossess.

If I have seen one thing  
is the passing preciousness of dreams ;  
at aspects are within us ; and who seems  
Most kingly is the King.

1867 : WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS.

## AT LULWORTH COVE A CENTURY BACK

HAD I but lived a hundred years ago  
I might have gone, as I have gone this year,  
By Warmwell Cross on to a Cove I know,  
And Time have placed his finger on me there :

“ *You see that man?* ”—I might have looked, and said,  
“ O yes : I see him. One that boat has brought  
Which dropped down Channel round Saint Alban’s  
Head.

So commonplace a youth calls not my thought.”

“ *You see that man?* ”—“ Why yes ; I told you ; yes :  
Of an idling town-sort ; thin ; hair brown in hue ;  
And as the evening light scants less and less  
He looks up at a star, as many do.”

“ *You see that man?* ”—“ Nay, leave me ! ” then I plead,  
“ I have fifteen miles to vamp across the lea,  
And it grows dark, and I am weary-kneed :  
I have said the third time ; yes, that man I see ! ”

“ Good. That man goes to Rome—to death, despair ;  
And no one notes him now but you and I :  
A hundred years, and the world will follow him there,  
And bend with reverence where his ashes lie.”

*September 1920.*

NOTE.—In September 1820 Keats, on his way to Rome, landed one day on the Dorset coast, and composed the sonnet, “ Bright star ! would I were steadfast as thou art ” The spot of his landing is judged to have been Lulworth Cove.

## A BYGONE OCCASION

(SONG)

THAT night, that night,  
That song, that song !  
Will such again be evened quite  
Through lifetimes long ?

No mirth was shown  
To outer seers,  
But mood to match has not been known  
In modern years.

O eyes that smiled,  
O lips that lured ;  
That such would last was one beguiled  
To think ensured !

That night, that night,  
That song, that song ;  
O drink to its recalled delight,  
Though tears may throng !

## TWO SERENADES

### I

#### *On Christmas Eve*

LATE on Christmas Eve, in the street alone,  
Outside a house, on the pavement-stone,  
I sang to her, as we'd sung together  
On former eves ere I felt her tether.—  
Above the door of green by me  
Was she, her casement seen by me ;  
But she would not heed  
What I melodied  
In my soul's sore need—  
She would not heed.

Cassiopeia overhead,  
And the Seven of the Wain, heard what I said  
As I bent me there, and voiced, and fingered  
Upon the strings. . . . Long, long I lingered :  
Only the curtains hid from her  
One whom caprice had bid from her ;  
But she did not come,  
And my heart grew numb  
And dull my strum ;  
She did not come.

### II

#### *A Year Later*

I SKIMMED the strings ; I sang quite low ;  
I hoped she would not come or know

## TWO SERENADES

That the house next door was the one now dittied,  
Not hers, as when I had played unpitied ;  
—Next door, where dwelt a heart fresh stirred,  
My new Love, of good will to me,  
Unlike my old Love chill to me,  
Who had not cared for my notes when heard :

Yet that old Love came  
To the other's name  
As hers were the claim ;  
Yea, the old Love came.

My viol sank mute, my tongue stood still,  
I tried to sing on, but vain my will :  
I prayed she would guess of the later, and leave me ;  
She stayed, as though, were she slain by the smart,  
She would bear love's burn for a newer heart.  
The tense-drawn moment wrought to bereave me  
Of voice, and I turned in a dumb despair  
At her finding I'd come to another there.

Sick I withdrew  
At love's grim hue  
Ere my last Love knew ;  
Sick I withdrew.

From an old copy.

## THE WEDDING MORNING

TABITHA dressed for her wedding :—

“ Tabby, why look so sad ? ”

“ —O I feel a great gloominess spreading, spreading,  
Instead of supremely glad! . . .

“ I called on Carry last night,  
And he came whilst I was there,  
Not knowing I'd called. So I kept out of sight,  
And I heard what he said to her :

“ —Ah, I'd far liefer marry  
*You*, Dear, to-morrow ! ” he said,  
‘ But that cannot be.’ —O I'd give him to Carry,  
And willingly see them wed,

“ But how can I do it when  
His baby will soon be born ?  
After that I hope I may die. And then  
She can have him. I shall not mourn ! ”

## END OF THE YEAR 1912

You were here at his young beginning,  
You are not here at his agèd end ;  
Off he coaxed you from Life's mad spinning,  
Lest you should see his form extend  
Shivering, sighing,  
Slowly dying,  
And a tear on him expend.

So it comes that we stand lonely  
In the star-lit avenue,  
Dropping broken lipwords only,  
For we hear no songs from you,  
Such as flew here  
For the new year  
Once, while six bells swung thereto.

## THE CHIMES PLAY "LIFE'S A BUMPER!"

"AWAKE! I'm off to cities far away,"  
I said; and rose, on peradventures bent.  
The chimes played "Life's a Bumper!" long that day  
To the measure of my walking as I went:  
Their sweetness frisked and floated on the lea,  
As they played out "Life's a Bumper!" there to me.

"Awake!" I said. "I go to take a bride!"  
—The sun arose behind me ruby-red  
As I journeyed townwards from the countryside,  
The chiming bells saluting near ahead.  
Their sweetness swelled in tripping tings of glee  
As they played out "Life's a Bumper!" there to me.

"Again arise." I seek a turfy slope,  
And go forth slowly on an autumn noon,  
And there I lay her who has been my hope,  
And think, "O may I follow hither soon!"  
While on the wind the chimes come cheerily,  
Playing out "Life's a Bumper!" there to me.

## “I WORKED NO WILE TO MEET YOU”

(SONG)

I WORKED no wile to meet you,  
My sight was set elsewhere,  
I cheered about to shun you,  
And lent your life no care.  
I was unprimed to greet you  
At such a date and place,  
Constraint alone had won you  
Vision of my strange face!

You did not seek to see me  
Then or at all, you said,  
—Meant passing when you neared me,  
But stumbling-blocks forbade.  
You even had thought to flee me,  
By other mindings moved ;  
No influent star endeared me,  
Unknown, unrecked, unproved!

What, then, was there to tell us  
The flux of fluttering hours  
Of their own tide would bring us  
By no device of ours  
To where the daysprings well us  
Heart-hydromels that cheer,  
Till Time enearth and swing us  
Round with the turning sphere.

## AT THE RAILWAY STATION, UPWAY

“THERE is not much that I can do,  
For I’ve no money that’s quite my own!”  
Spoke up the pitying child—

A little boy with a violin  
At the station before the train came in,—  
“But I can play my fiddle to you,  
And a nice one ’tis, and good in tone!”

The man in the handcuffs smiled ;  
The constable looked, and he smiled, too,  
As the fiddle began to twang ;  
And the man in the handcuffs suddenly sang

With grimful glee :  
“This life so free  
Is the thing for me !”

And the constable smiled, and said no word,  
As if unconscious of what he heard ;  
And so they went on till the train came in—  
The convict, and boy with the violin.

## SIDE BY SIDE

So there sat they,  
The estranged two,  
Thrust in one pew  
By chance that day ;  
Placed so, breath-nigh,  
Each comer unwitting  
Who was to be sitting  
In touch close by.

Thus side by side  
Blindly alighted,  
They seemed united  
As groom and bride,  
Who'd not communed  
For many years—  
Lives from twain spheres  
With hearts distuned.

Her fringes brushed  
His garment's hem  
As the harmonies rushed  
Through each of them :  
Her lips could be heard  
In the creed and psalms,  
And their fingers neared  
At the giving of alms.

And women and men,  
The matins ended,  
By looks commended  
Them, joined again.

## SIDE BY SIDE

Quickly said she,  
"Don't undeceive them—  
Better thus leave them":  
"Quite so," said he.

Slight words!—the last  
Between them said,  
Those two, once wed,  
Who had not stood fast.  
Diverse their ways  
From the western door,  
To meet no more  
In their span of days.

## DREAM OF THE CITY SHOPWOMAN

'TWERE sweet to have a comrade here,  
Who'd vow to love this garreteer,  
By city people's snap and sneer  
    Tried oft and hard !

We'd rove a truant cock and hen  
To some snug solitary glen,  
And never be seen to haunt again  
    This teeming yard.

Within a cot of thatch and clay  
We'd list the flitting pipers play,  
Our lives a twine of good and gay  
    Enwreathed discreetly ;

Our blithest deeds so neighbouring wise  
That doves should coo in soft surprise,  
" These must belong to Paradise  
    Who live so sweetly."

Our clock should be the closing flowers,  
Our sprinkle-bath the passing showers,  
Our church the alleyed willow bowers,  
    The truth our theme ;

And infant shapes might soon abound :  
Their shining heads would dot us round  
Like mushroom balls on grassy ground. . . .  
    —But all is dream !

## DREAM OF THE CITY SHOPWOMAN

O God, that creatures framed to feel  
A yearning nature's strong appeal  
Should writhe on this eternal wheel  
In rayless grime ;

And vainly note, with wan regret,  
Each star of early promise set ;  
Till Death relieves, and they forget  
Their one Life's time !

WESTBOURNE PARK VILLAS, 1866.

## A MAIDEN'S PLEDGE

(SONG)

I do not wish to win your vow  
To take me soon or late as bride,  
And lift me from the nook where now  
I tarry your farings to my side.  
I am blissful ever to abide  
In this green labyrinth—let all be,  
If but, whatever may betide,  
You do not leave off loving me!

Your comet-comings I will wait  
With patience time shall not wear through ;  
The yellowing years will not abate  
My largened love and truth to you,  
Nor drive me to complaint undue  
Of absence, much as I may pine,  
If never another 'twixt us two  
Shall come, and you stand wholly mine.

## THE CHILD AND THE SAGE

You say, O Sage, when weather-checked,  
    “ I have been favoured so  
With cloudless skies, I must expect  
    This dash of rain or snow.”

“ Since health has been my lot,” you say,  
    “ So many months of late,  
I must not chafe that one short day  
    Of sickness mars my state.”

You say, “ Such bliss has been my share  
    From Love’s unbroken smile,  
It is but reason I should bear  
    A cross therein awhile.”

And thus you do not count upon  
    Continuance of joy ;  
But, when at ease, expect anon  
    A burden of annoy.

But, Sage—this Earth—why not a place  
    Where no reprisals reign,  
Where never a spell of pleasantness  
    Makes reasonable a pain ?

*December 21, 1908.*

## MISMET

### I

HE was leaning by a face,  
He was looking into eyes,  
And he knew a trysting-place,  
And he heard seductive sighs ;

But the face,  
And the eyes,  
And the place,  
And the sighs,

Were not, alas, the right ones—the ones meet for  
him—

Though fine and sweet the features, and the feelings  
all abrim.

### II

She was looking at a form,  
She was listening for a tread,  
She could feel a waft of charm  
When a certain name was said ;

But the form,  
And the tread,  
And the charm,  
And name said,

Were the wrong ones for her, and ever would be so,  
While the heritor of the right it would have saved her  
soul to know !

## AN AUTUMN RAIN-SCENE

THERE trudges one to a merry-making  
With a sturdy swing,  
On whom the rain comes down.

To fetch the saving medicament  
Is another bent,  
On whom the rain comes down.

One slowly drives his herd to the stall  
Ere ill befall,  
On whom the rain comes down.

This bears his missives of life and death  
With quickening breath,  
On whom the rain comes down.

One watches for signals of wreck or war  
From the hill afar,  
On whom the rain comes down.

No care if he gain a shelter or none,  
Unhired moves one,  
On whom the rain comes down.

And another knows nought of its chilling fall  
Upon him at all,  
On whom the rain comes down.

*October 1904.*

## MEDITATIONS ON A HOLIDAY

(A NEW THEME TO AN OLD FOLK-MEASURE)

'Tis a May morning,  
All-adorning,  
No cloud warning  
    Of rain to-day.  
Where shall I go to,  
Go to, go to?—  
Can I say No to  
    Lyonnese-way?

Well—what reason  
Now at this season  
Is there for treason  
    To other shrines?  
Tristram is not there,  
Isolt forgot there,  
New eras blot there  
    Sought-for signs!

Stratford-on-Avon—  
Poesy-paven—  
I'll find a haven  
    There, somehow!—  
Nay—I'm but caught of  
Dreams long thought of,  
The Swan knows nought of  
    His Avon now!

## MEDITATIONS ON A HOLIDAY

What shall it be, then,  
I go to see, then,  
Under the plea, then,  
Of votary ?

I'll go to Lakeland,  
Lakeland, Lakeland,  
Certainly Lakeland  
Let it be.

But—why to that place,  
That place, that place,  
Such a hard come-at place  
Need I fare ?

When its bard cheers no more,  
Loves no more, fears no more,  
Sees no more, hears no more  
Anything there !

Ah, there is Scotland,  
Burns's Scotland,  
And Waverley's. To what land  
Better can I hie ?—

Yet—if no whit now  
Feel those of it now—  
Care not a bit now  
For it—why I ?

I'll seek a town street,  
Aye, a brick-brown street,  
Quite a tumbledown street,  
Drawing no eyes.  
For a Mary dwelt there,  
And a Percy felt there  
Heart of him melt there,  
A Claire likewise.

Why incline to *that* city,  
Such a city, *that* city,  
Now a mud-bespat city !—  
Care the lovers who

## MEDITATIONS ON A HOLIDAY

Now live and walk there,  
Sit there and talk there,  
Buy there, or hawk there,  
Or wed, or woo ?

Laughters in a volley  
Greet so fond a folly  
As nursing melancholy  
    In this and that spot,  
Which, with most endeavour,  
Those can visit never,  
But for ever and ever  
    Will now know not !

If, on lawns Elysian,  
With a broadened vision  
And a faint derision  
    Conscious be they,  
How they might reprove me  
That these fancies move me,  
Think they ill behoove me,  
    Smile, and say :

“ What !—our hoar old houses,  
Where the bygone drowses,  
Nor a child nor spouse is  
    Of our name at all ?  
Such abodes to care for,  
Inquire about and bear for,  
And suffer wear and tear for—  
    How weak of you and small ! ”

*May 1921.*

## AN EXPERIENCE

WIT, weight, or wealth there was not  
In anything that was said,  
In anything that was done;  
All was of scope to cause not  
A triumph, dazzle, or dread  
To even the subtlest one,  
    My friend,  
To even the subtlest one.

But there was a new affliction—  
An aura zephyring round  
That care infected not:  
It came as a salutation,  
And, in my sweet astound,  
I scarcely witted what  
    Might pend,  
I scarcely witted what.

The hills in samewise to me  
Spoke, as they grayly gazed,  
—First hills to speak so yet!  
The thin-edged breezes blew me  
What I, though cobwebbed, crazed,  
Was never to forget,  
    My friend,  
Was never to forget!

## THE BEAUTY

O do not praise my beauty more,  
In such word-wild degree,  
And say I am one all eyes adore ;  
For these things harass me !

But do for ever softly say :  
“ From now unto the end  
Come weal, come wanzing, come what may,  
Dear, I will be your friend.”

I hate my beauty in the glass :  
My beauty is not I :  
I wear it : none cares whether, alas,  
Its wearer live or die !

The inner I O care for, then,  
Yea, me and what I am,  
And shall be at the gray hour when  
My cheek begins to clam.

NOTE.—“The Regent Street beauty, Miss Verrey, the Swiss confectioner’s daughter, whose personal attractions have been so mischievously exaggerated, died of fever on Monday evening, brought on by the annoyance she had been for some time subject to.”—London paper, October 1828.

## THE COLLECTOR CLEANS HIS PICTURE

Fili hominis, ecce ego tollo a te desiderabile oculorum tuorum in plaga.  
—EZECH. xxiv. 16.

How I remember cleaning that strange picture! . . .  
I had been deep in duty for my sick neighbour—  
His besides my own—over several Sundays,  
Often, too, in the week; so with parish pressures,  
Baptisms, burials, doctorings, conjugal counsel—  
All the whatnots asked of a rural parson—  
Faith, I was well-nigh broken, should have been fully  
Saving for one small secret relaxation,  
One that in mounting manhood had grown my hobby.

This was to delve at whiles for easel-lumber,  
Stowed in the backmost slums of a soon-reached city,  
Merely on chance to uncloak some worthy canvas,  
Panel, or plaque, blacked blind by uncouth adventure,  
Yet under all concealing a precious artfeat.  
Such I had found not yet. My latest capture  
Came from the rooms of a trader in ancient house-gear  
Who had no scent of beauty or soul for brushcraft.  
Only a tittle cost it—murked with grimefilms,  
Gatherings of slow years, thick-varnished over,  
Never a feature manifest of man's painting.

So, one Saturday, time ticking hard on midnight  
Ere an hour subserved, I set me upon it.  
Long with coiled-up sleeves I cleaned and yet cleaned,  
Till a first fresh spot, a high light, looked forth,  
Then another, like fair flesh, and another;  
Then a curve, a nostril, and next a finger,

## THE COLLECTOR CLEANS HIS PICTURE

Tapering, shapely, significantly pointing slantwise.  
“Flemish?” I said. “Nay, Spanish. . . . But, nay,  
Italian!”

—Then meseemed it the guise of the ranker Venus,  
Named of some Astarte, of some Cotyutto.  
Down I knelt before it and kissed the panel,  
Drunk with the lure of love’s inhibited dreamings.

Till the dawn I rubbed, when there leered up at me  
A hag, that had slowly emerged from under my hands  
there,  
Pointing the slanted finger towards a bosom  
Eaten away of a rot from the lusts of a lifetime. . . .  
—I could have ended myself at the lashing lesson!  
Stunned I sat till roused by a clear-voiced bell-chime,  
Fresh and sweet as the dew-fleece under my luthern.  
It was the matin service calling to me  
From the adjacent steeple.

## THE WOOD FIRE

### (A FRAGMENT)

“ THIS is a brightsome blaze you've lit, good friend,  
to-night!”

“ —Aye, it has been the bleakest spring I have felt for  
years,

And nought compares with cloven logs to keep alight :  
I buy them bargain-cheap of the executioniers,  
As I dwell near ; and they wanted the crosses out of  
sight

By Passover, not to affront the eyes of visitors.

“ Yes, they're from the crucifixions last week-ending  
At Kranion. We can sometimes use the poles again,  
But they get split by the nails, and 'tis quicker work  
than mending

To knock together new ; though the uprights now and  
then

Serve twice when they're let stand. But if a feast's  
impending,

As lately, you've to tidy up for the comers' ken.

“ Though only three were impaled, you may know it  
didn't pass off

So quietly as was wont? That Galilee carpenter's son  
Who boasted he was king, incensed the rabble to scoff:  
I heard the noise from my garden. This piece is the  
one he was on. . . .

Yes, it blazes up well if lit with a few dry chips and  
shroff;

And it's worthless for much else, what with cuts and  
stains thereon.”

## SAYING GOOD-BYE

(SONG)

We are always saying  
“Good-bye, good-bye !”  
In work, in playing,  
In gloom, in gaying :  
    At many a stage  
    Of pilgrimage  
    From youth to age  
    We say, “Good-bye,  
    Good-bye !”

We are undiscerning  
    Which go to sigh,  
Which will be yearning  
For soon returning ;  
    And which no more  
    Will dark our door,  
    Or tread our shore,  
    But go to die,  
    To die.

Some come from roaming  
    With joy again ;  
Some, who come homing  
By stealth at gloaming,  
    Had better have stopped  
    Till death, and dropped  
    By strange hands propped,  
    Than come so fain,  
    So fain.

## SAYING GOOD-BYE

So, with this saying,  
    "Good-bye, good-bye,"  
We speed their waying  
Without betraying  
    Our grief, our fear  
    No more to hear  
    From them, close, clear,  
Again: "Good-bye,  
    Good-bye!"

## ON THE TUNE CALLED THE OLD-HUNDRED-AND-FOURTH

We never sang together  
Ravenscroft's terse old tune  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
In sharp or summer weather,  
At night-time or at noon.

Why did we never sing it,  
Why never so incline  
On Sundays or on weekdays,  
Even when soft wafts would wing it  
From your far floor to mine?

Shall we that tune, then, never  
Stand voicing side by side  
On Sundays or on weekdays? . . .  
Or shall we, when for ever  
In Sheol we abide,

Sing it in desolation,  
As we might long have done  
On Sundays or on weekdays  
With love and exultation  
Before our sands had run?

## THE OPPORTUNITY

(FOR H. P.)

FORTY springs back, I recall,  
We met at this phase of the Maytime :  
We might have clung close through all,  
But we parted when died that daytime.

We parted with smallest regret ;  
Perhaps should have cared but slightly,  
Just then, if we never had met :  
Strange, strange that we lived so lightly

Had we mused a little space  
At that critical date in the Maytime,  
One life had been ours, one place,  
Perhaps, till our long cold claytime.

—This is a bitter thing  
For thee, O man : what ails it ?  
The tide of chance may bring  
Its offer ; but nought avails it !

## EVELYN G. OF CHRISTMINSTER

I CAN see the towers  
In mind quite clear  
Not many hours'  
Faring from here;  
But how up and go,  
And briskly bear  
Thither, and know  
That you are not there?

Though the birds sing small,  
And apple and pear  
On your trees by the wall  
Are ripe and rare,  
Though none excel them,  
I have no care  
To taste them or smell them  
And you not there.

Though the College stones  
Are stroked with the sun,  
And the gownsmen and Dons  
Who held you as one  
Of brightest brow  
Still think as they did,  
Why haunt with them now  
Your candle is hid?

Towards the river  
A pealing swells:  
They cost me a quiver—  
Those prayerful bells!

## EVELYN G. OF CHRISTMINSTER

How go to God,  
Who can reprove  
With so heavy a rod  
As your swift remove !

The chorded keys  
Wait all in a row,  
And the bellows wheeze  
As long ago.  
And the psalter lingers,  
And organist's chair ;  
But where are your fingers  
That once wagged there ?

Shall I then seek  
That desert place  
This or next week,  
And those tracks trace  
That fill me with cark  
And cloy ; nowhere  
Being movement or mark  
Of you now there !

## THE RIFT

(SONG: *Minor Mode*)

'TWAS just at gnat and cobweb-time,  
When yellow begins to show in the leaf,  
That your old gamut changed its chime  
From those true tones—of span so brief!—  
That met my beats of joy, of grief,  
As rhyme meets rhyme.

So sank I from my high sublime!  
We faced but chancewise after that,  
And never I knew or guessed my crime. . . .  
Yes; 'twas the date—or nigh thereat—  
Of the yellowing leaf; at moth and gnat  
And cobweb-time.

## VOICES FROM THINGS GROWING IN A CHURCHYARD

THESE flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,  
Sir or Madam,  
A little girl here sepultured.  
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird  
Above the grass, as now I wave  
In daisy shapes above my grave,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—I am one Bachelor Bowring, “Gent,”  
Sir or Madam ;  
In shingled oak my bones were pent ;  
Hence more than a hundred years I spent  
In myfeat of change from a coffin-thrall  
To a dancer in green as leaves on a wall,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—I, these berries of juice and gloss,  
Sir or Madam,  
Am clean forgotten as Thomas Voss ;  
Thin-urned, I have burrowed away from the moss  
That covers my sod, and have entered this yew,  
And turned to clusters ruddy of view,  
All day cheerily,  
All night eerily !

—The Lady Gertrude, proud, high-bred,  
Sir or Madam,  
Am I—this laurel that shades your head ;  
Into its veins I have stilly sped,

## VOICES IN A CHURCHYARD

And made them of me ; and my leaves now shine,  
As did my satins superfine,  
    All day cheerily,  
    All night eerily !

—I, who as innocent withwind climb,  
    Sir or Madam,  
Am one Eve Greensleeves, in olden time  
Kissed by men from many a clime,  
Beneath sun, stars, in blaze, in breeze,  
As now by glowworms and by bees,  
    All day cheerily,  
    All night eerily !<sup>1</sup>

—I'm old Squire Audeley Grey, who grew,  
    Sir or Madam,  
Aweary of life, and in scorn withdrew ;  
Till anon I clambered up anew  
As ivy-green, when my ache was stayed,  
And in that attire I have longtime gayed  
    All day cheerily,  
    All night eerily !

—And so these maskers breathe to each  
    Sir or Madam  
Who lingers there, and their lively speech  
Affords an interpreter much to teach,  
As their murmurous accents seem to come  
Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum,  
    All day cheerily,  
    All night eerily !

<sup>1</sup> It was said her real name was Eve Trevillian or Trevelyan ; and that she was the handsome mother of two or three illegitimate children, *circa* 1784-95.

## ON THE WAY

THE trees fret fitfully and twist,  
Shutters rattle and carpets heave,  
Slime is the dust of yestereve,  
And in the streaming mist  
Fishes might seem to fin a passage if they list.

But to his feet,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
A hidden seat,  
The fog is sweet  
And the wind a lyre.

A vacant sameness grays the sky,  
A moisture gathers on each knop  
Of the bramble, rounding to a drop,  
That greets the goer-by  
With the cold listless lustre of a dead man's eye.

But to her sight,  
Drawing nigh and nigher  
Its deep delight,  
The fog is bright  
And the wind a lyre.

## “SHE DID NOT TURN”

SHE did not turn,  
But passed foot-faint with averted head  
In her gown of green, by the bobbing fern,  
Though I leaned over the gate that led  
From where we waited with table spread ;

But she did not turn :  
Why was she near there if love had fled ?

She did not turn,  
Though the gate was whence I had often sped  
In the mists of morning to meet her, and learn  
Her heart, when its moving moods I read  
As a book—she mine, as she sometimes said ;

But she did not turn,  
And passed foot-faint with averted head.

## GROWTH IN MAY

I ENTER a daisy-and-buttercup land,  
And thence thread a jungle of grass :  
Hurdles and stiles scarce visible stand  
Above the lush stems as I pass.

Hedges peer over, and try to be seen,  
And seem to reveal a dim sense  
That amid such ambitious and elbow-high green  
They make a mean show as a fence.

Elsewhere the mead is possessed of the neats,  
That range not greatly above  
The rich rank thicket which brushes their teats,  
And *her* gown, as she waits for her Love.

## NEAR CHARD.

## THE CHILDREN AND SIR NAMELESS

SIR NAMELESS, once of Athelhall, declared :  
" These wretched children romping in my park  
Trample the herbage till the soil is bared,  
And yap and yell from early morn till dark !  
Go keep them harnessed to their set routines :  
Thank God I've none to hasten my decay ;  
For green remembrance there are better means  
Than offspring, who but wish their sires away."

Sir Nameless of that mansion said anon :  
" To be perpetuate for my mightiness  
Sculpture must image me when I am gone."  
—He forthwith summoned carvers there express  
To shape a figure stretching seven-odd feet  
(For he was tall) in alabaster stone,  
With shield, and crest, and casque, and sword com-  
plete :  
When done a statelier work was never known.

Three hundred years hied ; Church-restorers came,  
And, no one of his lineage being traced,  
They thought an effigy so large in frame  
Best fitted for the floor. There it was placed,  
Under the seats for schoolchildren. And they  
Kicked out his name, and hobnailed off his nose ;  
And, as they yawn through sermon-time, they say,  
" Who was this old stone man beneath our toes ? "

## AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY

THESE summer landscapes—clump, and copse, and  
croft—

Woodland and meadowland—here hung aloft,  
Gay with limp grass and leafery new and soft,

Seem caught from the immediate season's yield  
I saw last noonday shining over the field,  
By rapid snatch, while still are uncongealed

The saps that in their live originals climb ;  
Yester's quick greenage here set forth in mime  
Just as it stands, now, at our breathing-time.

But these young foils so fresh upon each tree,  
Soft verdures spread in sprouting novelty,  
Are not this summer's though they feign to be.

Last year their May to Michaelmas term was run,  
Last autumn browned and buried every one,  
And no more know they sight of any sun.

## HER TEMPLE

DEAR, think not that they will forget you :

—If craftsmanly art should be mine  
I will build up a temple, and set you  
Therein as its shrine.

They may say : “Why a woman such honour?”

—Be told, “O, so sweet was her fame,  
That a man heaped this splendour upon her ;  
None now knows his name.”

## A TWO-YEARS' IDYLL

Yes ; such it was ;  
Just those two seasons unsought,  
Sweeping like summertide wind on our ways ;  
Moving, as straws,  
Hearts quick as ours in those days ;  
Going like wind, too, and rated as nought  
Save as the prelude to plays  
Soon to come—larger, life-fraught :  
Yes ; such it was.

“ Nought ” it was called,  
Even by ourselves—that which springs  
Out of the years for all flesh, first or last,  
Commonplace, scrawled  
Dully on days that go past.  
Yet, all the while, it upbore us like wings  
Even in hours overcast :  
Aye, though this best thing of things,  
“ Nought ” it was called !

What seems it now ?  
Lost : such beginning was all ;  
Nothing came after : romance straight forsook  
Quickly somehow  
Life when we sped from our nook,  
Primed for new scenes with designs smart and tall. . . .  
—A preface without any book,  
A trumpet uplipped, but no call ;  
That seems it now.

## BY HENSTRIDGE CROSS AT THE YEAR'S END

(From this centuries-old cross-road the highway leads east to London, north to Bristol and Bath, west to Exeter and the Land's End, and south to the Channel coast.)

Why go the east road now? . . .  
That way a youth went on a morrow  
After mirth, and he brought back sorrow  
Painted upon his brow:  
Why go the east road now? .

Why go the north road now?  
Torn, leaf-strewn, as if scoured by foemen,  
Once edging fiefs of my forefolk yeomen,  
Fallows fat to the plough:  
Why go the north road now?

Why go the west road now?  
Thence to us came she, bosom-burning,  
Welcome with joyousness returning. . . .  
She sleeps under the bough:  
Why go the west road now?

Why go the south road now?  
That way marched they some are forgetting,  
Stark to the moon left, past regretting  
Loves who have falsed their vow. . . .  
Why go the south road now?

Why go any road now?  
White stands the handpost for brisk onbearers,  
"Halt!" is the word for wan-cheeked farers  
Musing on Whither, and How. . . .  
Why go any road now?

## BY HENSTRIDGE CROSS

“ Yea : we want new feet now ”  
Answer the stones. “ Want chit-chat, laughter :  
Plenty of such to go hereafter  
By our tracks, we trow !  
We are for new feet now.”

*During the War.*

## PENANCE

“WHY do you sit, O pale thin man,  
At the end of the room  
By that harpsichord, built on the quaint old plan ?  
—It is cold as a tomb,  
And there’s not a spark within the grate ;  
And the jingling wires  
Are as vain desires  
That have lagged too late.”

“Why do I ? Alas, far times ago  
A woman lyred here  
In the evenfall ; one who fain did so  
From year to year ;  
And, in loneliness bending wistfully,  
Would wake each note  
In sick sad rote,  
None to listen or see !

“I would not join. I would not stay,  
But drew away,  
Though the winter fire beamed brightly. . . . Aye !  
I do to-day  
What I would not then ; and the chill old keys,  
Like a skull’s brown teeth  
Loose in their sheath,  
Freeze my touch ; yes, freeze.”

## “I LOOK IN HER FACE”

(SONG: *Minor*)

I look in her face and say,  
“Sing as you used to sing  
About Love’s blossoming”;  
But she hints not Yea or Nay.

“Sing, then, that Love’s a pain,  
If, Dear, you think it so,  
Whether it be or no”;  
But dumb her lips remain.

I go to a far-off room,  
A faint song ghosts my ear;  
*Which* song I cannot hear,  
But it seems to come from a tomb.

## AFTER THE WAR

LAST Post sounded  
Across the mead  
To where he loitered  
With absent heed.  
Five years before  
In the evening there  
Had flown that call  
To him and his Dear.  
“ You’ll never come back ;  
Good-bye ! ” she had said ;  
“ Here I’ll be living,  
And my Love dead ! ”

Those closing minims  
Had been as shafts darting  
Through him and her pressed  
In that last parting ;  
They thrilled him not now,  
In the selfsame place  
With the selfsame sun  
On his war-seamed face.  
“ Lurks a god’s laughter  
In this ? ” he said,  
“ That I am the living  
And she the dead ! ”

## “IF YOU HAD KNOWN”

If you had known  
When listening with her to the far-down moan  
Of the white-selvaged and empurpled sea,  
And rain came on that did not hinder talk,  
Or damp your flashing facile gaiety  
In turning home, despite the slow wet walk  
By crooked ways, and over stiles of stone ;

If you had known

You would lay roses,  
Fifty years thence, on her monument, that discloses  
Its graying shape upon the luxuriant green ;  
Fifty years thence to an hour, by chance led there,  
What might have moved you?—yea, had you foreseen  
That on the tomb of the selfsame one, gone where  
The dawn of every day is as the close is,  
You would lay roses !

1920.

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

(A.D. 185—)

I'VE been thinking it through, as I play here to-night,  
    to play never again,  
By the light of that lowering sun peering in at the  
    window-pane,  
And over the back-street roofs, throwing shades from  
    the boys of the chore  
In the gallery, right upon me, sitting up to these keys  
    once more. . . .

How I used to hear tongues ask, as I sat here when I  
    was new :  
“ Who is she playing the organ ? She touches it  
    mighty true ! ”  
“ She travels from Havenpool Town,” the deacon  
    would softly speak,  
“ The stipend can hardly cover her fare hither twice  
    in the week.”  
(It fell far short of doing, indeed ; but I never told,  
For I have craved minstrelsy more than lovers, or  
    beauty, or gold.)

'Twas so he answered at first, but the story grew  
    different later :  
“ It cannot go on much longer, from what we hear of  
    her now ! ”  
At the meaning wheeze in the words the inquirer  
    would shift his place  
Till he could see round the curtain that screened me  
    from people below.

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

"A handsome girl," he would murmur, upstaring (and so I am).

"But—too much sex in her build; fine eyes, but eyelids too heavy;

A bosom too full for her age; in her lips too voluptuous a dye."

(It may be. But who put it there? Assuredly it was not I.)

I went on playing and singing when this I had heard, and more,

Though tears half-blinded me; yes, I remained going on and on,

Just as I used me to chord and to sing at the selfsame time! . . .

For it's a contralto—my voice is; they'll hear it again here to-night

In the psalmody notes that I love far beyond every lower delight.

Well, the deacon, in fact, that day had learnt new tidings about me;

They troubled his mind not a little, for he was a worthy man.

(He trades as a chemist in High Street, and during the week he had sought

His fellow-deacon, who threw as a bookbinder over the way.)

"These are strange rumours," he said. "We must guard the good name of the chapel.

If, sooth, she's of evil report, what else can we do but dismiss her?"

"—But get such another to play here we cannot for double the price!"

It settled the point for the time, and I triumphed awhile in their strait,

And my much-beloved grand semibreves went living on, pending my fate.

At length in the congregation more headshakes and murmurs were rife,  
 And my dismissal was ruled, though I was not warned of it then.  
 But a day came when they declared it. The news entered me as a sword;  
 I was broken; so pallid of face that they thought I should faint, they said.  
 I rallied. "O, rather than go, I will play you for nothing!" said I.  
 'Twas in much desperation I spoke it, for bring me to forfeit I could not  
 Those melodies chorded so richly for which I had laboured and lived.  
 They paused. And for nothing I played at the chapel through Sundays again,  
 Upheld by that art which I loved more than blandishments lavished of men.

But it fell that murmurs anew from the flock broke the pastor's peace.  
 Some member had seen me at Havenpool, comrading close a sea-captain.  
 (O yes; I was thereto constrained, lacking means for the fare to and fro.)  
 Yet God knows, if aught He knows ever, I loved the Old-Hundredth, Saint Stephen's, Mount Zion, New Sabbath, Miles-Lane, Holy Rest, and Arabia, and Eaton, Above all embraces of body by wooers who sought me and won! . . .  
 Next week 'twas declared I was seen coming home with a swain ere the sun.

The deacons insisted then, strong; and forgiveness I did not implore.  
 I saw all was lost for me, quite, but I made a last bid in my throbs.

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

My bent, finding victual in lust, men's senses had  
libelled my soul,  
But the soul should die game, if I knew it! I turned to  
my masters and said :  
" I yield, Gentlemen, without parlance. But—let me  
just hymn you *once* more!  
It's a little thing, Sirs, that I ask ; and a passion is  
music with me!"  
They saw that consent would cost nothing, and show  
as good grace, as knew I,  
Though tremble I did, and feel sick, as I paused  
thereat, dumb for their words.  
They gloomily nodded assent, saying, " Yes, if you  
care to. Once more,  
And only once more, understand." To that with a  
bend I agreed.  
— " You've a fixed and a far-reaching look," spoke one  
who had eyed me awhile.  
" I've a fixed and a far-reaching plan, and my look  
only showed it," I smile.

This evening of Sunday is come—the last of my  
functioning here.  
" She plays as if she were possessed!" they exclaim,  
glancing upward and round.  
" Such harmonies I never dreamt the old instrument  
capable of!"  
Meantime the sun lowers and goes ; shades deepen ;  
the lights are turned up,  
And the people voice out the last singing : tune Tallis :  
the Evening Hymn.  
(I wonder Dissenters sing Ken : it shows them more  
liberal in spirit  
At this little chapel down here than at certain new  
others I know.)  
I sing as I play. Murmurs some one : " No woman's  
throat richer than hers!"

## THE CHAPEL-ORGANIST

“True: in these parts,” think I. “But, my man, never more will its richness outspread.”  
And I sing with them onward: “The grave dread as little do I as my bed.”

I lift up my feet from the pedals; and then, while my eyes are still wet  
From the symphonies born of my fingers, I do that whereon I am set,  
And draw from my “full round bosom” (their words; how can *I* help its heave?)  
A bottle blue-coloured and fluted—a vinaigrette, they may conceive—  
And before the choir measures my meaning, reads aught in my moves to and fro,  
I drink from the phial at a draught, and they think it a pick-me-up; so.  
Then I gather my books as to leave, bend over the keys as to pray.  
When they come to me motionless, stooping, quick death will have whisked me away.

“Sure, nobody meant her to poison herself in her haste, after all!”  
The deacons will say as they carry me down and the night shadows fall,  
“Though the charges were true,” they will add. “It’s a case red as scarlet withal!”  
I have never once minced it. Lived chaste I have not. Heaven knows it above! . . .  
But past all the heavings of passion—it’s music has been my life-love! . . .  
That tune did go well—this last playing! . . . I reckon they’ll bury me here. . . .  
Not a soul from the seaport my birthplace—will come, or bestow me . . . a tear.

## FETCHING HER

AN hour before the dawn,  
My friend,  
You lit your waiting bedside-lamp,  
Your breakfast-fire anon,  
And outing into the dark and damp  
You saddled, and set on.

Thuswise, before the day,  
My friend,  
You sought her on her surfy shore,  
To fetch her thence away  
Unto your own new-builded door  
For a staunch lifelong stay.

You said : " It seems to be,  
My friend,  
That I were bringing to my place  
The pure brine breeze, the sea,  
The mews—all her old sky and space,  
In bringing her with me ! "

—But time is prompt to expugn,  
My friend,  
Such magic-minted conjurings :  
The brought breeze fainted soon,  
And then the sense of seamews' wings,  
And the shore's sibilant tune.

So, it had been more due,  
My friend,  
Perhaps, had you not pulled this flower  
From the craggy nook it knew,  
And set it in an alien bower ;  
But left it where it grew !

## “COULD I BUT WILL”

(SONG: *Verses 1, 3, key major; verse 2, key minor*)

COULD I but will,  
Will to my bent,  
I'd have afar ones near me still,  
And music of rare ravishment,  
In strains that move the toes and heels!  
And when the sweethearts sat for rest  
The unbetrothed should foot with zest  
Ecstatic reels.

Could I be head,  
Head-god, “Come, now,  
Dear girl,” I'd say, “whose flame is fled,  
Who liest with linen-banded brow,  
Stirred but by shakes from Earth's deep core—”  
I'd say to her: “Unshroud and meet  
That Love who kissed and called thee Sweet!—  
Yea, come once more!”

Even half-god power  
In spinning dooms  
Had I, this frozen scene should flower,  
And sand-swept plains and Arctic glooms  
Should green them gay with waving leaves,  
Mid which old friends and I would walk  
With weightless feet and magic talk  
Uncounted eves.

## SHE REVISITS ALONE THE CHURCH OF HER MARRIAGE

I HAVE come to the church and chancel,  
Where all's the same!

—Brighter and larger in my dreams  
Truly it shaped than now, meseems,  
Is its substantial frame.

But, anyhow, I made my vow,  
Whether for praise or blame,  
Here in this church and chancel  
Where all's the same.

Where touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his ?  
The step looks shyly at the sun,  
And says, " 'Twas here the thing was done,  
For bale or else for bliss !"  
Of all those there I least was ware  
Would it be that or this  
When touched the check-floored chancel  
My knees and his !

Here in this fateful chancel  
Where all's the same,  
I thought the culminant crest of life  
Was reached when I went forth the wife  
I was not when I came.  
Each commonplace one of my race,  
Some say, has such an aim—  
To go from a fateful chancel  
As not the same.

## THE CHURCH OF HER MARRIAGE

Here, through this hoary chancel  
Where all's the same,  
A thrill, a gaiety even, ranged  
That morning when it seemed I changed  
My nature with my name.  
Though now not fair, though gray my hair,  
He loved me, past proclaim,  
Here in this hoary chancel,  
Where all's the same.

## AT THE ENTERING OF THE NEW YEAR

### I

#### (OLD STYLE)

OUR songs went up and out the chimney,  
And roused the home-gone husbandmen ;  
Our allemands, our heys, pousettings,  
Our hands-across and back again,  
Sent rhythmic throbings through the casements  
    On to the white highway,  
Where nighted farers paused and muttered,  
    “Keep it up well, do they !”

The contrabasso’s measured booming  
Sped at each bar to the parish bounds,  
To shepherds at their midnight lambings,  
To stealthy poachers on their rounds ;  
And everybody caught full duly  
    The notes of our delight,  
As Time unrobed the Youth of Promise  
    Hailed by our sanguine sight.

### II

#### (NEW STYLE)

WE stand in the dusk of a pine-tree limb,  
As if to give ear to the muffled peal,  
Brought or withheld at the breeze’s whim ;  
But our truest heed is to words that steal

## AT THE ENTERING OF THE NEW YEAR

From the mantled ghost that looms in the gray,  
And seems, so far as our sense can see,  
To feature bereaved Humanity,  
As it sighs to the imminent year its say :—

“O stay without, O stay without,  
Calm comely Youth, untasked, untired ;  
Though stars irradiate thee about  
Thy entrance here is undesired.  
Open the gate not, mystic one ;  
Must we avow what we would close confine ?  
*With thee, good friend, we would have converse none,*  
Albeit the fault may not be thine.”

*December 31. During the War.*

## THEY WOULD NOT COME

I TRAVELED to where in her lifetime  
She'd knelt at morning prayer,  
To call her up as if there;  
But she paid no heed to my suing,  
As though her old haunt could win not  
A thought from her spirit, or care.

I went where my friend had lectured  
The prophets in high declaim,  
That my soul's ear the same  
Full tones should catch as aforetime;  
But silenced by gear of the Present  
Was the voice that once there came!

Where the ocean had sprayed our banquet  
I stood, to recall it as then:  
The same eluding again!  
No vision. Shows contingent  
Affrighted it further from me  
Even than from my home-den.

When I found them no responders,  
But fugitives prone to flee  
From where they had used to be,  
It vouch'd I had been led hither  
As by night wisps in bogland,  
And bruised the heart of me!

## AFTER A ROMANTIC DAY

THE railway bore him through  
An earthen cutting out from a city :  
    There was no scope for view,  
Though the frail light shed by a slim young moon  
    Fell like a friendly tune.

Fell like a liquid ditty,  
And the blank lack of any charm  
    Of landscape did no harm.  
The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough,  
    And moon-lit, was enough  
For poetry of place : its weathered face  
Formed a convenient sheet whereon  
The visions of his mind were drawn.

## THE TWO WIVES

(SMOKER'S CLUB-STORY)

I WAITED at home all the while they were boating together—

My wife and my near neighbour's wife :  
Till there entered a woman I loved more than life,  
And we sat and sat on, and beheld the uprising dark  
weather,  
With a sense that some mischief was rife.

Tidings came that the boat had capsized, and that one  
of the ladies

Was drowned—which of them was unknown :  
And I marvelled—my friend's wife?—or was it  
my own  
Who had gone in such wise to the land where the sun  
as the shade is?  
—We learnt it was *his* had so gone.

Then I cried in unrest : “ He is free ! But no good is  
releasing

To him as it would be to me ! ”  
“ —But it is,” said the woman I loved, quietly.  
“ How ? ” I asked her. “ —Because he has long loved  
me too without ceasing,  
And it's just the same thing, don't you see.”

## “I KNEW A LADY”

(CLUB SONG)

I KNEW a lady when the days  
Grew long, and evenings goldened ;  
But I was not emboldened  
By her prompt eyes and winning ways.

And when old Winter nipt the haws,  
“Another’s wife I’ll be,  
And then you’ll care for me,”  
She said, “and think how sweet I was !”

And soon she shone as another’s wife :  
As such I often met her,  
And sighed, “How I regret her !  
My folly cuts me like a knife !”

And then, to-day, her husband came,  
And moaned, “Why did you flout her ?  
Well could I do without her !  
For both our burdens you are to blame !”

## A HOUSE WITH A HISTORY

THERE is a house in a city street  
Some past ones made their own;  
Its floors were criss-crossed by their feet,  
And their babblings beat  
From ceiling to white hearth-stone.

And who are peopling its parlours now?  
Who talk across its floor?  
Mere freshlings are they, blank of brow,  
Who read not how  
Its prime had passed before

Their raw equipments, scenes, and says  
Afflicted its memoried face,  
That had seen every larger phase  
Of human ways  
Before these filled the place.

To them that house's tale is theirs,  
No former voices call  
Aloud therein. Its aspect bears  
Their joys and cares  
Alone, from wall to wall.

## A PROCESSION OF DEAD DAYS

I SEE the ghost of a perished day ;  
I know his face, and the feel of his dawn :  
'Twas he who took me far away  
    To a spot strange and gray :  
Look at me, Day, and then pass on,  
But come again : yes, come anon !

Enters another into view ;  
His features are not cold or white,  
But rosy as a vein seen through :  
    Too soon he smiles adieu.  
Adieu, O ghost-day of delight ;  
But come and grace my dying sight.

Enters the day that brought the kiss :  
He brought it in his foggy hand  
To where the mumbling river is,  
    And the high clematis ;  
It lent new colour to the land,  
And all the boy within me manned.

Ah, this one. Yes, I know his name,  
He is the day that wrought a shine  
Even on a precinct common and tame,  
    As 'twere of purposed aim.  
He shows him as a rainbow sign  
Of promise made to me and mine.

The next stands forth in his morning clothes,  
And yet, despite their misty blue,  
They mark no sombre custom-growths  
That joyous living loathes,  
But a meteor act, that left in its queue  
A train of sparks my lifetime through.

I almost tremble at his nod—  
This next in train—who looks at me  
As I were slave, and he were god  
Wielding an iron rod.  
I close my eyes ; yet still is he  
In front there, looking mastery.

In semblance of a face averse  
The phantom of the next one comes :  
I did not know what better or worse  
Chancings might bless or curse  
When his original glossed the thrums  
Of ivy, bringing that which numbs.

Yes ; trees were turning in their sleep  
Upon their windy pillows of gray  
When he stole in. Silent his creep  
On the grassed eastern steep. . . .  
I shall not soon forget that day,  
And what his third hour took away !

## HE FOLLOWS HIMSELF

IN a heavy time I dogged myself  
Along a louring way,  
Till my leading self to my following self  
Said: "Why do you hang on me  
So harassing?"

"I have watched you, Heart of mine," I cried,  
"So often going astray  
And leaving me, that I have pursued,  
Feeling such truancy  
Ought not to be."

He said no more, and I dogged him on  
From noon to the dun of day  
By prowling paths, until anew  
He begged: "Please turn and flee!—  
What do you see?"

"Methinks I see a man," said I,  
"Dimming his hours to gray.  
I will not leave him while I know  
Part of myself is he  
Who dreams such dree!"

"I go to my old friend's house," he urged,  
"So do not watch me, pray!"  
"Well, I will leave you in peace," said I,  
"Though of this poignancy  
You should fight free:

## HE FOLLOWS HIMSELF

“ Your friend, O other me, is dead ;  
    You know not what you say.”

—“ That do I ! And at his green-grassed door  
    By night’s bright galaxy  
        I bend a knee.”

—The yew-plumes moved like mockers’ beards  
    Though only boughs were they,  
And I seemed to go ; yet still was there,  
    And am, and there haunt we  
        Thus bootlessly.

## THE SINGING WOMAN

THERE was a singing woman  
Came riding across the mead  
At the time of the mild May weather,  
Tameless, tireless ;  
This song she sung : "I am fair, I am young!"  
And many turned to heed.

And the same singing woman  
Sat crooning in her need  
At the time of the winter weather ;  
Friendless, fireless,  
She sang this song : "Life, thou'rt too long!"  
And there was none to heed.

## WITHOUT, NOT WITHIN HER

IT was what you bore with you, Woman,  
Not only were,  
That throned you from all else human,  
However fair !

It was that strange freshness you carried  
Into a soul  
Whereon no thought of yours tarried  
Two moments at all.

And out from his spirit flew death,  
And bale, and ban,  
Like the corn-chaff under the breath  
Of the winnowing-fan.

## “O I WON’T LEAD A HOMELY LIFE

*(To an old air)*

“O I won’t lead a homely life  
As father’s Jack and mother’s Jill,  
But I will be a fiddler’s wife,  
With music mine at will !

Just a little tune,  
Another one soon,  
As I merrily fling my fill !”

And she became a fiddler’s Dear,  
And merry all day she strove to be ;  
And he played and played afar and near,  
But never at home played he  
Any little tune  
Or late or soon ;  
And sunk and sad was she !

## IN THE SMALL HOURS

I LAY in my bed and fiddled  
With a dreamland viol and bow,  
And the tunes flew back to my fingers  
I had melodied years ago.  
It was two or three in the morning  
When I fancy-fiddled so  
Long reels and country-dances,  
And hornpipes swift and slow.

And soon anon came crossing  
The chamber in the gray  
Figures of jigging fieldfolk—  
Saviours of corn and hay—  
To the air of “Haste to the Wedding,”  
As after a wedding-day;  
Yea, up and down the middle  
In windless whirls went they!

There danced the bride and bridegroom,  
And couples in a train,  
Gay partners time and travail  
Had longwhiles stilled amain! . . .  
It seemed a thing for weeping  
To find, at slumber’s wane  
And morning’s sly increeping,  
That Now, not Then, held reign.

## THE LITTLE OLD TABLE

CREAK, little wood thing, creak,  
When I touch you with elbow or knee ;  
That is the way you speak  
Of one who gave you to me !

You, little table, she brought—  
Brought me with her own hand,  
As she looked at me with a thought  
That I did not understand.

—Whoever owns it anon,  
And hears it, will never know  
What a history hangs upon  
This creak from long ago.

## VAGG HOLLOW

Vagg Hollow is a marshy spot on the old Roman Road near Ilchester, where "things" are seen. Merchandise was formerly fetched inland from the canal-boats at Load-Bridge by waggons this way.

"WHAT do you see in Vagg Hollow,  
Little boy, when you go  
In the morning at five on your lonely drive?"  
"—I see men's souls, who follow  
Till we've passed where the road lies low,  
When they vanish at our creaking!"

"They are like white faces speaking  
Beside and behind the waggon—  
One just as father's was when here.  
The waggoner drinks from his flagon,  
(Or he'd flinch when the Hollow is near)  
But he does not give me any.

"Sometimes the faces are many;  
But I walk along by the horses,  
He asleep on the straw as we jog;  
And I hear the loud water-courses,  
And the drops from the trees in the fog,  
And watch till the day is breaking,

"And the wind out by Tintinhull waking;  
I hear in it father's call  
As he called when I saw him dying,  
And he sat by the fire last Fall,  
And mother stood by sighing;  
But I'm not afraid at all!"

## THE DREAM IS—WHICH?

I AM laughing by the brook with her,  
Splashed in its tumbling stir ;  
And then it is a blankness looms  
As if I walked not there,  
Nor she, but found me in haggard rooms,  
And treading a lonely stair.

With radiant cheeks and rapid eyes  
We sit where none espies ;  
Till a harsh change comes edging in  
As no such scene were there,  
But winter, and I were bent and thin,  
And cinder-gray my hair.

We dance in heys around the hall,  
Weightless as thistleball ;  
And then a curtain drops between,  
As if I danced not there,  
But wandered through a mounded green  
To find her, I knew where.

*March 1913.*

## THE COUNTRY WEDDING

(A FIDDLER'S STORY)

LITTLE fogs were gathered in every hollow,  
But the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather  
As we marched with our fiddles over the heather  
—How it comes back!—to their wedding that day.

Our getting there brought our neighbours and all, O!  
Till, two and two, the couples stood ready.  
And her father said: "Souls, for God's sake, be  
steady!"  
And we strung up our fiddles, and sounded out "A."

The groomsman he stared, and said, "You must  
follow!"  
But we'd gone to fiddle in front of the party,  
(Our feelings as friends being true and hearty)  
And fiddle in front we did—all the way.

Yes, from their door by Mill-tail-Shallow,  
And up Styles-Lane, and by Front-Street houses,  
Where stood maids, bachelors, and spouses,  
Who cheered the songs that we knew how to play.

I bowed the treble before her father,  
Michael the tenor in front of the lady,  
The bass-viol Reub—and right well played he!—  
The serpent Jim; ay, to church and back.

## THE COUNTRY WEDDING

I thought the bridegroom was flurried rather,  
As we kept up the tune outside the chancel,  
While they were swearing things none can cancel  
Inside the walls to our drumstick's whack.

"Too gay!" she pleaded. "Clouds may gather,  
And sorrow come." But she gave in, laughing,  
And by supper-time when we'd got to the quaffing  
Her fears were forgot, and her smiles weren't slack.

A grand wedding 'twas! And what would follow  
We never thought. Or that we should have buried her  
On the same day with the man that married her,  
A day like the first, half hazy, half clear.

Yes: little fogs were in every hollow,  
Though the purple hillocks enjoyed fine weather,  
When we went to play 'em to church together,  
And carried 'em there in an after year.

## FIRST OR LAST

(SONG)

If grief come early  
Joy comes late,  
If joy come early  
Grief will wait ;  
Aye, my dear and tender !

Wise ones joy them early  
While the cheeks are red,  
Banish grief till surly  
Time has dulled their dread.

And joy being ours  
Ere youth has flown,  
The later hours  
May find us gone ;  
Aye, my dear and tender !

## LONELY DAYS

LONELY her fate was,  
Environed from sight  
In the house where the gate was  
Past finding at night.  
None there to share it,  
No one to tell :  
Long she'd to bear it,  
And bore it well.

Elsewhere just so she  
Spent many a day ;  
Wishing to go she  
Continued to stay.  
And people without  
Basked warm in the air,  
But none sought her out,  
Or knew she was there.  
Even birthdays were passed so,  
Sunny and shady :  
Years did it last so  
For this sad lady.  
Never declaring it,  
No one to tell,  
Still she kept bearing it—  
Bore it well.

The days grew chillier,  
And then she went  
To a city, familiar  
In years forespent,

## LONELY DAYS

When she walked gaily  
Far to and fro,  
But now, moving frailly,  
Could nowhere go.  
The cheerful colour  
Of houses she'd known  
Had died to a duller  
And dingier tone.  
Streets were now noisy  
Where once had rolled  
A few quiet coaches,  
Or citizens strolled.  
Through the party-wall  
Of the memoried spot  
They danced at a ball  
Who recalled her not.  
Tramlines lay crossing  
Once gravelled slopes,  
Metal rods clanked,  
And electric ropes.  
So she endured it all,  
Thin, thinner wrought,  
Until time cured it all,  
And she knew nought.

Versified from a Diary.

## “WHAT DID IT MEAN?”

WHAT did it mean that noontide, when  
    You bade me pluck the flower  
Within the other woman's bower,  
    Whom I knew nought of then ?

I thought the flower blushed deeper—aye,  
And as I drew its stalk to me  
It seemed to breathe : “ I am, I see,  
Made use of in a human play.”

And while I plucked, upstarted sheer  
As phantom from the pane thereby  
A corpse-like countenance, with eye  
That iced me by its baleful peer—  
    Silent, as from a bier. . . .

When I came back your face had changed,  
    It was no face for me ;  
O did it speak of hearts estranged,  
    And deadly rivalry  
        In times before  
        I darked your door,  
        To seize me of  
        Mere second love,  
Which still the haunting first deranged ?

## AT THE DINNER-TABLE

I sat at dinner in my prime,  
And glimpsed my face in the sideboard-glass,  
And started as if I had seen a crime,  
And prayed the ghastly show might pass.

Wrenched wrinkled features met my sight,  
Grinning back to me as my own ;  
I well-nigh fainted with affright  
At finding me a haggard crone.

My husband laughed. He had slyly set  
A warping mirror there, in whim  
To startle me. My eyes grew wet ;  
I spoke not all the eve to him.

He was sorry, he said, for what he had done,  
And took away the distorting glass,  
Uncovering the accustomed one ;  
And so it ended ? No, alas,

Fifty years later, when he died,  
I sat me in the selfsame chair,  
Thinking of him. Till, weary-eyed,  
I saw the sideboard facing there ;

And from its mirror looked the lean  
Thing I'd become, each wrinkle and score  
The image of me that I had seen  
In jest there fifty years before.

## THE MARBLE TABLET

THERE it stands, though alas, what a little of her  
Shows in its cold white look!  
Not her glance, glide, or smile ; not a tittle of her  
Voice like the purl of a brook ;  
Not her thoughts, that you read like a book.

It may stand for her once in November  
When first she breathed, witless of all ;  
Or in heavy years she would remember  
When circumstance held her in thrall ;  
Or at last, when she answered her call !

Nothing more. The still marble, date-graven,  
Gives all that it can, tersely lined ;  
That one has at length found the haven  
Which every one other will find ;  
With silence on what shone behind.

ST. JULIOT: *September 8, 1916.*

## THE MASTER AND THE LEAVES

### I

WE are budding, Master, budding,  
We of your favourite tree;  
March drought and April flooding  
Arouse us merrily,  
Our stemlets newly studding;  
And yet you do not see!

### II

We are fully woven for summer  
In stuff of limpest green,  
The twitterer and the hummer  
Here rest of nights, unseen,  
While like a long-roll drummer  
The nightjar thrills the treen.

### III

We are turning yellow, Master,  
And next we are turning red,  
And faster then and faster  
Shall seek our rooty bed,  
All wasted in disaster!  
But you lift not your head.

## MASTER AND THE LEAVES

### IV

—“I mark your early going,  
And that you'll soon be clay,  
I have seen your summer showing  
As in my youthful day;  
But why I seem unknowing  
Is too sunk in to say !”

1917.

## LAST WORDS TO A DUMB FRIEND

PET was never mourned as you,  
Purrer of the spotless hue,  
Plumy tail, and wistful gaze  
While you humoured our queer ways,  
Or outshrilled your morning call  
Up the stairs and through the hall—  
Foot suspended in its fall—  
While, expectant, you would stand  
Arched, to meet the stroking hand ;  
Till your way you chose to wend  
Yonder, to your tragic end.

Never another pet for me !  
Let your place all vacant be ;  
Better blankness day by day  
Than companion torn away.  
Better bid his memory fade,  
Better blot each mark he made,  
Selfishly escape distress  
By contrived forgetfulness,  
Than preserve his prints to make  
Every morn and eve an ache.

From the chair whereon he sat  
Sweep his fur, nor wince thereat ;  
Rake his little pathways out  
Mid the bushes roundabout ;

## LAST WORDS TO A DUMB FRIEND

Smooth away his talons' mark  
From the claw-worn pine-tree bark,  
Where he climbed as dusk embrowned,  
Waiting us who loitered round.

Strange it is this speechless thing,  
Subject to our mastering,  
Subject for his life and food  
To our gift, and time, and mood ;  
Timid pensioner of us Powers,  
His existence ruled by ours,  
Should—by crossing at a breath  
Into safe and shielded death,  
By the merely taking hence  
Of his insignificance—  
Loom as largened to the sense,  
Shape as part, above man's will,  
Of the Imperturbable.

As a prisoner, flight debarred,  
Exercising in a yard,  
Still retain I, troubled, shaken,  
Mean estate, by him forsaken ;  
And this home, which scarcely took  
Impress from his little look,  
By his faring to the Dim  
Grows all eloquent of him.

Housemate, I can think you still  
Bounding to the window-sill,  
Over which I vaguely see  
Your small mound beneath the tree,  
Showing in the autumn shade  
That you moulder where you played.

*October 2, 1904.*

## A DRIZZLING EASTER MORNING

AND he is risen? Well, be it so. . . .  
And still the pensive lands complain,  
And dead men wait as long ago,  
As if, much doubting, they would know  
What they are ransomed from, before  
They pass again their sheltering door.

I stand amid them in the rain,  
While blusters vex the yew and vane;  
And on the road the weary wain  
Plods forward, laden heavily;  
And toilers with their aches are fain  
For endless rest—though risen is he.

## ON ONE WHO LIVED AND DIED WHERE HE WAS BORN

WHEN a night in November  
Blew forth its bleared airs  
An infant descended  
His birth-chamber stairs  
For the very first time,  
At the still, midnight chime ;  
All unapprehended  
His mission, his aim.—  
Thus, first, one November,  
An infant descended  
The stairs.

On a night in November  
Of weariful cares,  
A frail aged figure  
Ascended those stairs  
For the very last time :  
All gone his life's prime,  
All vanished his vigour,  
And fine, forceful frame :  
Thus, last, one November  
Ascended that figure  
Upstairs.

On those nights in November—  
Apart eighty years—  
The babe and the bent one  
Who traversed those stairs

## ONE WHO LIVED AND DIED

From the early first time  
To the last feeble climb—  
That fresh and that spent one—  
Were even the same :  
Yea, who passed in November  
As infant, as bent one,  
Those stairs.

Wise child of November !  
From birth to blanched hairs  
Descending, ascending,  
Wealth-wantless, those stairs ;  
Who saw quick in time  
As a vain pantomime  
Life's tending, its ending,  
The worth of its fame.  
Wise child of November,  
Descending, ascending  
Those stairs !

## THE SECOND NIGHT

(BALLAD)

I MISSED one night, but the next I went ;  
It was gusty above, and clear ;  
She was there, with the look of one ill-content,  
And said : " Do not come near ! "

— " I am sorry last night to have failed you here,  
And now I have travelled all day ;  
And it's long rowing back to the West-Hoe Pier,  
So brief must be my stay."

— " O man of mystery, why not say  
Out plain to me all you mean ?  
Why you missed last night, and must now away  
Is—another has come between ! "

— " O woman so mocking in mood and mien,  
So be it ! " I replied :  
" And if I am due at a differing scene  
Before the dark has died,

— " 'Tis that, unresting, to wander wide  
Has ever been my plight,  
And at least I have met you at Cremyll side  
If not last eve, to-night."

— " You get small rest—that read I quite ;  
And so do I, maybe ;  
Though there's a rest hid safe from sight  
Elsewhere awaiting me ! "

## THE SECOND NIGHT

A mad star crossed the sky to the sea,  
Wasting in sparks as it streamed,  
And when I looked back at her wistfully  
She had changed, much changed, it seemed :

The sparks of the star in her pupils gleamed,  
She was vague as a vapour now,  
And ere of its meaning I had dreamed  
She'd vanished—I knew not how.

I stood on, long ; each cliff-top bough,  
Like a cynic nodding there,  
Moved up and down, though no man's brow  
But mine met the wayward air.

Still stood I, wholly unaware  
Of what had come to pass,  
Or had brought the secret of my new Fair  
To my old Love, alas !

I went down then by crag and grass  
To the boat wherein I had come.  
Said the man with the oars : " This news of the lass  
Of Edgcumbe, is sharp for some !

" Yes : found this daybreak, stiff and numb  
On the shore here, whither she'd sped  
To meet her lover last night in the glum,  
And he came not, 'tis said.

" And she leapt down, heart-hit. Pity she's dead :  
So much for the faithful-bent ! " . . .  
I looked, and again a star overhead  
Shot through the firmament.

## SHE WHO SAW NOT

“Did you see something within the house  
That made me call you before the red sunsetting?  
Something that all this common scene endows  
With a richened impress there can be no forgetting?”

“—I have found nothing to see therein,  
O Sage, that should have made you urge me to enter,  
Nothing to fire the soul, or the sense to win :  
I rate you as a rare misrepresenter!”

“—Go anew, Lady,—in by the right. . . .  
Well : why does your face not shine like the face of  
Moses?”

“—I found no moving thing there save the light  
And shadow flung on the wall by the outside roses.”

“—Go yet once more, pray. Look on a seat.”  
“—I go. . . . O Sage, it’s only a man that sits there  
With eyes on the sun. Mute,—average head to feet.”  
“—No more?”—“No more. Just one the place  
befits there,

“As the rays reach in through the open door,  
And he looks at his hand, and the sun glows through  
his fingers,  
While he’s thinking thoughts whose tenour is no more  
To me than the swaying rose-tree shade that lingers.”

## SHE WHO SAW NOT

No more. And years drew on and on  
Till no sun came, dank fogs the house enfolding ;  
And she saw inside, when the form in the flesh had  
gone,  
As a vision what she had missed when the real be-  
holding.

## THE OLD WORKMAN

“WHY are you so bent down before your time,  
Old mason? Many have not left their prime  
So far behind at your age, and can still  
Stand full upright at will.”

He pointed to the mansion-front hard by,  
And to the stones of the quoin against the sky;  
“Those upper blocks,” he said, “that there you see,  
It was that ruined me.”

There stood in the air up to the parapet  
Crowning the corner height, the stones as set  
By him—ashlar whereon the gales might drum  
For centuries to come.

“I carried them up,” he said, “by a ladder there;  
The last was as big a load as I could bear;  
But on I heaved; and something in my back  
Moved, as 'twere with a crack.

“So I got crookt. I never lost that sprain;  
And those who live there, walled from wind and rain  
By freestone that I lifted, do not know  
That my life's ache came so.

“They don't know me, or even know my name,  
But good I think it, somehow, all the same  
To have kept 'em safe from harm, and right and tight,  
Though it has broke me quite.

## THE OLD WORKMAN

“Yes; that I fixed it firm up there I am proud,  
Facing the hail and snow and sun and cloud,  
And to stand storms for ages, beating round  
When I lie underground.”

## THE SAILOR'S MOTHER

“ O WHENCE do you come,  
Figure in the night-fog that chills me numb ? ”

“ I come to you across from my house up there,  
And I don't mind the brine-mist clinging to me  
That blows from the quay,  
For I heard him in my chamber, and thought you  
unaware.”

“ But what did you hear,  
That brought you blindly knocking in this middle-  
watch so drear ? ”

“ My sailor son's voice as 'twere calling at your door,  
And I don't mind my bare feet clammy on the stones,  
And the blight to my bones,  
For he only knows of *this* house I lived in before.”

“ Nobody's nigh,  
Woman like a skeleton, with socket-sunk eye.”

“ Ah—nobody's nigh ! And my life is drearisome,  
And this is the old home we loved in many a day  
Before he went away ;  
And the salt fog mops me. And nobody's come ! ”

From “ To Please his Wife.”

## OUTSIDE THE CASEMENT

(A REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR)

We sat in the room  
And praised her whom  
We saw in the portico-shade outside :  
She could not hear  
What was said of her,  
But smiled, for its purport we did not hide.

Then in was brought  
That message, fraught  
With evil fortune for her out there,  
Whom we loved that day  
More than any could say,  
And would fain have fenced from a waft of care.

And the question pressed  
Like lead on each breast,  
Should we cloak the tidings, or call her and tell ?  
It was too intense  
A choice for our sense,  
As we pondered and watched her we loved so well.

Yea, spirit failed us  
At what assailed us ;  
How long, while seeing what soon must come,  
Should we counterfeit  
No knowledge of it,  
And stay the stroke that would blanch and numb ?

## OUTSIDE THE CASEMENT

And thus, before  
For evermore  
Joy left her, we practised to beguile  
Her innocence when  
She now and again  
Looked in, and smiled us another smile.

## THE PASSER-BY

(L. H. RECALLS HER ROMANCE)

HE used to pass, well-trimmed and brushed,  
    My window every day,  
And when I smiled on him he blushed,  
That youth, quite as a girl might ; aye,  
    In the shyest way.

Thus often did he pass hereby,  
    That youth of bounding gait,  
Until the one who blushed was I,  
And he became, as here I sate,  
    My joy, my fate.

And now he passes by no more,  
    That youth I loved too true !  
I grieve should he, as here of yore,  
Pass elsewhere, seated in his view,  
    Some maiden new !

If such should be, alas for her !  
    He'll make her feel him dear,  
Become her daily comforter,  
Then tire him of her beauteous gear,  
    And disappear !

## “I WAS THE MIDMOST”

I WAS the midmost of my world  
When first I frisked me free,  
For though within its circuit gleamed  
But a small company,  
And I was immature, they seemed  
To bend their looks on me.

She was the midmost of my world  
When I went further forth,  
And hence it was that, whether I turned  
To south, east, west, or north,  
Beams of an all-day Polestar burned  
From that new axe of earth.

Where now is midmost in my world?  
I trace it not at all :  
No midmost shows it here, or there,  
When wistful voices call  
“We are fain! We are fain!” from everywhere  
On Earth’s bewildering ball!

## A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

(WOODSFORD CASTLE: 17—)

“WHAT do I catch upon the night-wind, husband?—  
What is it sounds in this house so eerily?  
It seems to be a woman’s voice: each little while I  
    hear it,  
And it much troubles me!”

“’Tis but the eaves dripping down upon the plinth-  
    slopes:  
Letting fancies worry thee!—sure ’tis a foolish thing,  
When we were on’y coupled half an hour before the  
    noontide,  
And now it’s but evening.”

“Yet seems it still a woman’s voice outside the castle,  
    husband,  
And ’tis cold to-night, and rain beats, and this is a  
    lonely place.  
Didst thou fathom much of womankind in travel or  
    adventure  
Ere ever thou sawest my face?”

“It may be a tree, bride, that rubs his arms across-  
    wise,  
If it is not the eaves-drip upon the lower slopes,

## A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

Or the river at the bend, where it whirls about the  
hatches  
Like a creature that sighs and mopes."

" Yet it still seems to me like the crying of a woman,  
And it saddens me much that so piteous a sound  
On this my bridal night when I would get agone from  
sorrow  
Should so ghost-like wander round!"

" To satisfy thee, Love, I will strike the flint-and-steel,  
then,  
And set the rush-candle up, and undo the door,  
And take the new horn-lantern that we bought upon  
our journey,  
And throw the light over the moor."

He struck a light, and breeched and booted in the  
further chamber,  
And lit the new horn-lantern and went from her sight,  
And vanished down the turret; and she heard him  
pass the postern,  
And go out into the night.

She listened as she lay, till she heard his step returning,  
And his voice as he unclothed him : "'Twas nothing,  
as I said,  
But the nor'-west wind a-blowing from the moor  
ath'art the river,  
And the tree that taps the gargoyle-head."

" Nay, husband, you perplex me; for if the noise I  
heard here,  
Awaking me from sleep so, were but as you avow,  
The rain-fall, and the wind, and the tree-bough, and  
the river,  
Why is it silent now?

## A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

‘And why is thy hand and thy clasping arm so shaking,  
And thy sleeve and tags of hair so muddy and so wet,  
And why feel I thy heart a-thumping every time thou kispest me,  
And thy breath as if hard to get?’

He lay there in silence for a while, still quickly breathing,  
Then started up and walked about the room resentfully :  
“O woman, witch, whom I, in sooth, against my will have wedded,  
Why castedst thou thy spells on me ?

“There was one I loved once : the cry you heard was her cry :  
She came to me to-night, and her plight was passing sore,  
As no woman. . . . Yea, and it was e'en the cry you heard, wife,  
But she will cry no more !

“And now I can't abide thee : this place, it hath a curse on't,  
This farmstead once a castle : I'll get me straight away !”  
He dressed this time in darkness, unspeaking, as she listened,  
And went ere the dawn turned day.

They found a woman's body at a spot called Rocky Shallow,  
Where the Froom stream curves amid the moorland, washed aground,  
And they searched about for him, the yeoman, who had darkly known her,  
But he could not be found.

### A SOUND IN THE NIGHT

And the bride left for good-and-all the farmstead once  
a castle,  
And in a county far away lives, mourns, and sleeps  
alone,  
And thinks in windy weather that she hears a woman  
crying,  
And sometimes an infant's moan.

## ON A DISCOVERED CURL OF HAIR

WHEN your soft welcomings were said,  
This curl was waving on your head,  
And when we walked where breakers dinned  
It sported in the sun and wind,  
And when I had won your words of grace  
It brushed and clung about my face.  
Then, to abate the misery  
Of absentness, you gave it me.

Where are its fellows now? Ah, they  
For brightest brown have donned a gray,  
And gone into a caverned ark,  
Ever unopened, always dark!

Yet this one curl, untouched of time,  
Beams with live brown as in its prime  
So that it seems I even could now  
Restore it to the living brow  
By bearing down the western road  
Till I had reached your old abode.

*February 1913.*

## AN OLD LIKENESS

(RECALLING R. T.)

WHO would have thought  
That, not having missed her  
Talks, tears, laughter  
In absence, or sought  
To recall for so long  
Her gamut of song ;  
Or ever to waft her  
Signal of aught  
That she, fancy-fanned,  
Would well understand,  
I should have kissed her  
Picture when scanned  
Yawning years after !

Yet, seeing her poor  
Dim-outlined form  
Chancewise at night-time,  
Some old allure  
Came on me, warm,  
Fresh, pleadful, pure,  
As in that bright time  
At a far season  
Of love and unreason,  
And took me by storm  
Here in this blight-time !

And thus it arose  
That, yawning years after  
Our early flows  
Of wit and laughter,

## AN OLD LIKENESS

And framing of rhymes  
At idle times,  
At sight of her painting,  
Though she lies cold  
In churchyard mould,  
I took its feinting  
As real, and kissed it  
As if I had wist it  
Herself of old.

## HER APOTHEOSIS

“ Secretum meum mihi ”

(FADED WOMAN'S SONG)

THERE were years vague of measure,  
    Needless the asking when;  
No honours, praises, pleasure  
    Reached common maids from men.

And hence no lures bewitched them,  
    No hand was stretched to raise,  
No gracious gifts enriched them,  
    No voices sang their praise.

Yet an iris at that season  
    Amid the accustomed slight  
From denseness, dull unreason,  
    Ringed me with living light.

## “SACRED TO THE MEMORY”

(MARY H.)

THAT “Sacred to the Memory”  
Is clearly carven there I own,  
And all may think that on the stone  
The words have been inscribed by me  
In bare conventionality.

They know not and will never know  
That my full script is not confined  
To that stone space, but stands deep lined  
Upon the landscape high and low  
Wherein she made such worthy show.

## TO A WELL-NAMED DWELLING

GLAD old house of lichened stonework,  
What I owed you in my lone work,  
    Noon and night!  
Whosoever faint or ailing,  
Letting go my grasp and failing,  
    You lent light.

How by that fair title came you?  
Did some forward eye so name you  
    Knowing that one,  
Stumbling down his century blindly,  
Would remark your sound, so kindly,  
    And be won?

Smile in sunlight, sleep in moonlight,  
Bask in April, May, and June-light,  
    Zephyr-fanned;  
Let your chambers show no sorrow,  
Blanching day, or stuporing morrow,  
    While they stand.

## THE WHIPPER-IN

“ My father was the whipper-in,—  
Is still—if I’m not misled ?  
And now I see, where the hedge is thin,  
A little spot of red ;  
Surely it is my father  
Going to the kennel-shed !

“ I cursed and fought my father—aye,  
And sailed to a foreign land ;  
And feeling sorry, I’m back, to stay,  
Please God, as his helping hand.  
Surely it is my father  
Near where the kennels stand ? ”

“ —True. Whipper-in he used to be  
For twenty years or more ;  
And you did go away to sea  
As youths have done before.  
Yes, oddly enough that red there  
Is the very coat he wore.

“ But he—he’s dead ; was thrown somehow,  
And gave his back a crick,  
And though that is his coat, ’tis now  
The scarecrow of a rick ;  
You’ll see when you get nearer—  
'Tis spread out on a stick.

## THE WHIPPER-IN

“ You see, when all had settled down  
Your mother’s things were sold,  
And she went back to her own town,  
And the coat, ate out with mould,  
Is now used by the farmer  
For scaring, as ‘tis old.”

## A MILITARY APPOINTMENT

(SCHERZANDO)

“So back you have come from the town, Nan, dear !  
And have you seen him there, or near—  
    That soldier of mine—  
Who long since promised to meet me here ?”

“—O yes, Nell : from the town I come,  
And have seen your lover on sick-leave home—  
    That soldier of yours—  
Who swore to meet you, or Strike-him-dumb :

“But has kept himself of late away ;  
Yet,—in short, he’s coming, I heard him say—  
    That lover of yours—  
To this very spot on this very day.”

“—Then I’ll wait, I’ll wait, through wet or dry !  
I’ll give him a goblet brimming high—  
    This lover of mine—  
And not of complaint one word or sigh !”

“—Nell, him I have chanced so much to see,  
That—he has grown the lover of me !—  
    That lover of yours—  
And it’s here our meeting is planned to be.”

THE MILESTONE  
BY THE RABBIT-BURROW

(ON YELL'HAM HILL)

IN my loamy nook  
As I dig my hole  
I observe men look  
At a stone, and sigh  
As they pass it by  
To some far goal.

Something it says  
To their glancing eyes  
That must distress  
The frail and lame,  
And the strong of frame  
Gladden or surprise.

Do signs on its face  
Declare how far  
Feet have to trace  
Before they gain  
Some blest champaign  
Where no gins are?

## THE LAMENT OF THE LOOKING-GLASS

WORDS from the mirror softly pass  
To the curtains with a sigh :  
“ Why should I trouble again to glass  
These smileless things hard by,  
Since she I pleasured once, alas,  
Is now no longer nigh ! ”

“ I’ve imaged shadows of coursing cloud,  
And of the plying limb  
On the pensive pine when the air is loud  
With its aerial hymn ;  
But never do they make me proud  
To catch them within my rim ! ”

“ I flash back phantoms of the night  
That sometimes flit by me,  
I echo roses red and white—  
The loveliest blooms that be—  
But now I never hold to sight  
So sweet a flower as she.”

## CROSS-CURRENTS

THEY parted—a pallid, trembling pair,  
And rushing down the lane  
He left her lonely near me there ;  
—I asked her of their pain.

“ It is for ever,” at length she said,  
“ His friends have schemed it so,  
That the long-purposed day to wed  
Never shall we two know.”

“ In such a cruel case,” said I,  
“ Love will contrive a course ? ”  
“ —Well, no . . . A thing may underlie,  
Which robs that of its force ;

“ A thing I could not tell him of,  
Though all the year I have tried ;  
This : never could I have given him love,  
Even had I been his bride.

“ So, when his kinsfolk stop the way  
Point-blank, there could not be  
A happening in the world to-day  
More opportune for me !

“ Yet hear—no doubt to your surprise—  
I am grieving, for his sake,  
That I have escaped the sacrifice  
I was distressed to make ! ”

## THE OLD NEIGHBOUR AND THE NEW

'TWAS to greet the new rector I called here,  
    But in the arm-chair I see  
My old friend, for long years installed here,  
    Who palely nods to me.

The new man explains what he's planning  
    In a smart and cheerful tone,  
And I listen, the while that I'm scanning  
    The figure behind his own.

The newcomer urges things on me ;  
    I return a vague smile thereto,  
The olden face gazing upon me  
    Just as it used to do !

And on leaving I scarcely remember  
    Which neighbour to-day I have seen,  
The one carried out in September,  
    Or him who but entered yestreen.

## THE CHOSEN

*"Ατινά ἔστιν ἀλληγορούμενα*

"A WOMAN for whom great gods might strive!"  
I said, and kissed her there :  
And then I thought of the other five,  
And of how charms outwear.

I thought of the first with her eating eyes,  
And I thought of the second with hers, green-gray,  
And I thought of the third, experienced, wise,  
And I thought of the fourth who sang all day.

And I thought of the fifth, whom I'd called a jade,  
And I thought of them all, tear-fraught ;  
And that each had shown her a passable maid,  
Yet not of the favour sought.

So I traced these words on the bark of a beech,  
Just at the falling of the mast :  
"After scanning five ; yes, each and each,  
I've found the woman desired—at last!"

"—I feel a strange benumbing spell,  
As one ill-wished!" said she.  
And soon it seemed that something fell  
Was starving her love for me.

"I feel some curse. O, *five* were there ?"  
And wanly she swerved, and went away.  
I followed sick : night numbed the air,  
And dark the mournful moorland lay.

## THE CHOSEN

cried : " O darling, turn your head ! "

But never her face I viewed ;  
" O turn, O turn ! " again I said,  
And miserably pursued.

At length I came to a Christ-cross stone  
Which she had passed without discern ;  
And I knelt upon the leaves there strown,  
And prayed aloud that she might turn.

I rose, and looked ; and turn she did ;  
I cried, " My heart revives ! "

" Look more," she said. I looked as bid ;  
Her face was all the five's.

All the five women, clear come back,  
I saw in her—with her made one,  
The while she drooped upon the track,  
And her frail term seemed well-nigh run.

She'd half forgot me in her change ;  
" Who are you ? Won't you say  
Who you may be, you man so strange,  
Following since yesterday ? "

I took the composite form she was,  
And carried her to an arbour small,  
Not passion-moved, but even because  
In one I could atone to all.

And there she lies, and there I tend,  
Till my life's threads unwind,  
A various womanhood in blend—  
Not one, but all combined.

## THE INSCRIPTION

### (A TALE)

SIR JOHN was entombed, and the crypt was closed,  
and she,  
Like a soul that could meet no more the sight of the sun,  
Inclined her in weepings and prayings continually,  
As his widowed one.

And to pleasure her in her sorrow, and fix his name  
As a memory Time's fierce frost should never kill,  
She caused to be richly chased a brass to his fame,  
Which should link them still ;

For she bonded her name with his own on the brazen  
page,  
As if dead and interred there with him, and cold, and  
numb,  
(Omitting the day of her dying and year of her age  
Till her end should come ;)

And implored good people to pray “**Of their Charfie**  
**For these thairne Soules,**”—yea, she who did last  
remain  
Forgoing Heaven's bliss if ever with spouse should she  
Again have lain.

Even there, as it first was set, you may see it now,  
Writ in quaint Church-text, with the date of her death  
left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where the folk yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

## THE INSCRIPTION

Thereafter some years slid, till there came a day  
When it slowly began to be marked of the standers-by  
That she would regard the brass, and would bend away  
With a drooping sigh.

Now the lady was fair as any the eye might scan  
Through a summer day of roving—a type at whose lip,  
Despite her maturing seasons, no meet man  
Would be loth to sip.

And her heart was stirred with a lightning love to its  
pith  
For a newcomer who, while less in years, was one  
Full eager and able to make her his own forthwith,  
Restrained of none.

But she answered Nay, death-white ; and still as he  
urged  
She adversely spake, overmuch as she loved the while,  
Till he pressed for why, and she led with the face of  
one scourged  
To the neighbouring aisle,

And showed him the words, ever gleaming upon  
her pew,  
Memorizing her there as the knight's eternal wife,  
Or falsing such, debarred inheritance due  
Of celestial life.

He blenched, and reproached her that one yet  
undeceased  
Should bury her future—that future which none can  
spell ;  
And she wept, and purposed anon to inquire of the  
priest  
If the price were hell

## THE INSCRIPTION

Of her wedding in face of the record. Her lover  
agreed,  
And they parted before the brass with a shudderful kiss,  
For it seemed to flash out on their impulse of passionate  
need,  
"Mock ye not this!"

Well, the priest, whom more perceptions moved than  
one,  
Said she erred at the first to have written as if she  
were dead  
Her name and adjuration ; but since it was done  
Nought could be said

Save that she must abide by the pledge, for the peace  
of her soul,  
And so, by her life, maintain the apostrophe good,  
If she wished anon to reach the coveted goal  
Of beatitude.

To erase from the consecrate text her prayer as there  
prayed  
Would aver that, since earth's joys most drew her,  
past doubt,  
Friends' prayers for her joy above by Jesu's aid  
Could be done without.

Moreover she thought of the laughter, the shrug, the  
jibe  
That would rise at her back in the nave when she  
should pass  
As another's avowed by the words she had chosen to  
inscribe  
On the changeless brass.

And so for months she replied to her Love : "No, no" ;  
While sorrow was gnawing her beauties ever and more,  
Till he, long-suffering and weary, grew to show  
Less warmth than before.

## THE INSCRIPTION

And, after an absence, wrote words absolute :  
That he gave her till Midsummer morn to make her  
mind clear ;  
And that if, by then, she had not said Yea to his suit,  
He should wed elsewhere.

Thence on, at unwonted times through the lengthening  
days  
She was seen in the church—at dawn, or when the  
sun dipt  
And the moon rose, standing with hands joined, blank  
of gaze,  
Before the script.

She thinned as he came not ; shrank like a creature  
that cowers  
As summer drew nearer ; but yet had not promised  
to wed,  
When, just at the zenith of June, in the still night  
hours,  
She was missed from her bed.

“The church!” they whispered with qualms ; “where  
often she sits.”  
They found her : facing the brass there, else seeing  
none,  
But feeling the words with her finger, gibbering in fits ;  
And she knew them not one.

And so she remained, in her handmaids’ charge ;  
late, soon,  
Tracing words in the air with her finger, as seen that  
night—  
Those incised on the brass—till at length unwatched  
one noon,  
She vanished from sight.

## THE INSCRIPTION

And, as talebearers tell, thence on to her last-taken  
breath  
Was unseen, save as wraith that in front of the brass  
made moan;  
So that ever the way of her life and the time of her  
death  
Remained unknown.

And hence, as indited above, you may read even now  
The quaint Church-text, with the date of her death  
left bare,  
In the aged Estminster aisle, where folk yet bow  
Themselves in prayer.

*October 30, 1907.*

## THE MARBLE-STREETED TOWN

I REACH the marble-streeted town,  
Whose "Sound" outbreathes its air  
    Of sharp sea-salts;  
I see the movement up and down  
    As when she was there.  
Ships of all countries come and go,  
    The bandsmen boom in the sun  
        A throbbing waltz;  
The schoolgirls laugh along the Hoe  
    As when she was one.

I move away as the music rolls :  
    The place seems not to mind  
        That she—of old  
The brightest of its native souls—  
    Left it behind !  
Over this green aforedays she  
    On light treads went and came,  
        Yea, times untold ;  
Yet none here knows her history—  
    Has heard her name.

PLYMOUTH (1914?).

## A WOMAN DRIVING

How she held up the horses' heads,  
Firm-lipped, with steady rein,  
Down that grim steep the coastguard treads,  
Till all was safe again !

With form erect and keen contour  
She passed against the sea,  
And, dipping into the chine's obscure,  
Was seen no more by me.

To others she appeared anew  
At times of dusky light,  
But always, so they told, withdrew  
From close and curious sight.

Some said her silent wheels would roll  
Rutless on softest loam,  
And even that her steeds' footfall  
Sank not upon the foam.

Where drives she now ? It may be where  
No mortal horses are,  
But in a chariot of the air  
Towards some radiant star.

## A WOMAN'S TRUST

IF he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again  
That scorn of him by men  
Could less disturb a woman's trust  
In him as a steadfast star which must  
Rise scathless from the nether spheres :  
If he should live a thousand years  
He'd find it not again.

She waited like a little child,  
Unchilled by damps of doubt,  
While from her eyes looked out  
A confidence sublime as Spring's  
When stressed by Winter's loiterings.  
Thus, howsoever the wicked wiled,  
She waited like a little child  
Unchilled by damps of doubt.

Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him  
And his aurore, so dim ;  
That, after fenweeds, flowers would blow ;  
And above all things did she show  
Her faith in his good faith with her ;  
Through cruel years and crueller  
Thus she believed in him !

## BEST TIMES

WE went a day's excursion to the stream,  
Basked by the bank, and bent to the ripple-gleam,  
    And I did not know  
    That life would show,  
However it might flower, no finer glow.

I walked in the Sunday sunshine by the road  
That wound towards the wicket of your abode,  
    And I did not think  
    That life would shrink  
To nothing ere it shed a rosier pink.

Unlooked for I arrived on a rainy night,  
And you hailed me at the door by the swaying light,  
    And I full forgot  
    That life might not  
Again be touching that ecstatic height.

And that calm eve when you walked up the stair,  
After a gaiety prolonged and rare,  
    No thought soever  
    That you might never  
Walk down again, struck me as I stood there.

Rewritten from an old draft.

## THE CASUAL ACQUAINTANCE

WHILE he was here with breath and bone,  
    To speak to and to see,  
Would I had known—more clearly known—  
    What that man did for me

When the wind scraped a minor lay,  
    And the spent west from white  
To gray turned tiredly, and from gray  
    To broadest bands of night!

But I saw not, and he saw not  
    What shining life-tides flowed  
To me-ward from his casual jot  
    Of service on that road.

He would have said : “ ‘Twas nothing new ;  
    We all do what we can ;  
‘Twas only what one man would do  
    For any other man.”

Now that I gauge his goodliness  
    He’s slipped from human eyes ;  
And when he passed there’s none can guess,  
    Or point out where he lies.

## INTRA SEPULCHRUM

WHAT curious things we said,  
What curious things we did  
Up there in the world we walked till dead,  
Our kith and kin amid !

How we played at love,  
And its wildness, weakness, woe ;  
Yes, played thereat far more than enough  
As it turned out, I trow !

Played at believing in gods  
And observing the ordinances,  
I for your sake in impossible codes  
Right ready to acquiesce.

Thinking our lives unique,  
Quite quainter than usual kinds,  
We held that we could not abide a week  
The tether of typic minds.

—Yet people who day by day  
Pass by and look at us  
From over the wall in a casual way  
Are of this unconscious ;

And feel, if anything,  
That none can be buried here  
Removed from commonest fashioning,  
Or lending note to a bier :

## INTRA SEPULCHRUM

No twain who in heart-heaves proved  
Themselves at all adept,  
Who more than many laughed and loved,  
Who more than many wept,

Or were as sprites or elves  
Into blind matter hurled,  
Or ever could have been to themselves  
The centre of the world.

## THE WHITEWASHED WALL

WHY does she turn in that shy soft way  
Whenever she stirs the fire,  
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall,  
As if entranced to admire  
Its whitewashed barenness more than the sight  
Of a rose in richest green?  
I have known her long, but this raptured rite  
I never before have seen.

—Well, once when her son cast his shadow there,  
A friend took a pencil and drew him  
Upon that flame-lit wall. And the lines  
Had a lifelike semblance to him.  
And there long stayed his familiar look ;  
But one day, ere she knew,  
The whitener came to cleanse the nook,  
And covered the face from view.

“ Yes,” he said : “ My brush goes on with a rush,  
And the draught is buried under ;  
When you have to whiten old cots and brighten,  
What else can you do, I wonder ? ”  
But she knows he’s there. And when she yearns  
For him, deep in the labouring night,  
She sees him as close at hand, and turns  
To him under his sheet of white.

## JUST THE SAME

I SAT. It all was past ;  
Hope never would hail again ;  
Fair days had ceased at a blast  
The world was a darkened den.

The beauty and dream were gone,  
And the halo in which I had hied  
So gaily gallantly on  
Had suffered blot and died !

I went forth, heedless whither,  
In a cloud too black for name :  
—People frisked hither and thither ;  
The world was just the same.

## THE LAST TIME

THE kiss had been given and taken,  
And gathered to many past :  
It never could reawaken ;  
But I heard none say : " It's the last ! "

The clock showed the hour and the minute,  
But I did not turn and look :  
I read no finis in it,  
As at closing of a book.

But I read it all too rightly  
When, at a time anon,  
A figure lay stretched out whitely,  
And I stood looking thereon.

## THE SEVEN TIMES

THE dark was thick. A boy he seemed at that time  
Who trotted by me with uncertain air;  
"I'll tell my tale," he murmured, "for I fancy  
A friend goes there? . . ."

Then thus he told. "I reached—'twas for the first  
time—

A dwelling. Life was clogged in me with care;  
I thought not I should meet an eyesome maiden,  
But found one there.

"I entered on the precincts for the second time—  
'Twas an adventure fit and fresh and fair—  
I slackened in my footsteps at the porchway,  
And found her there.

"I rose and travelled thither for the third time,  
The hope-hues growing gayer and yet gayer  
As I hastened round the bosage of the outskirts,  
And found her there.

"I journeyed to the place again the fourth time  
(The best and rarest visit of the rare,  
As it seemed to me, engrossed about these goings),  
And found her there.

"When I bent me to my pilgrimage the fifth time  
(Soft-thinking as I journeyed I would dare  
A certain word at token of good auspice),  
I found her there.

## THE SEVEN TIMES

“ That landscape did I traverse for the sixth time,  
And dreamed on what we purposed to prepare ;  
I reached a tryst before my journey’s end came,  
And found her there.

“ I went again—long after—aye, the seventh time ;  
The look of things was sinister and bare  
As I caught no customed signal, heard no voice call,  
Nor found her there.

“ And now I gad the globe—day, night, and any time,  
To light upon her hiding unaware,  
And, maybe, I shall nigh me to some nymph-niche,  
And find her there ! ”

“ But how,” said I, “ has your so little lifetime  
Given roomage for such loving, loss, despair ?  
A boy so young ! ” Forthwith I turned my lantern  
Upon him there.

His head was white. His small form, fine aforetime,  
Was shrunken with old age and battering wear,  
An eighty-years long plodder saw I pacing  
Beside me there.

## THE SUN'S LAST LOOK ON THE COUNTRY GIRL

(M. H.)

THE sun threw down a radiant spot  
    On the face in the winding-sheet—  
The face it had lit when a babe's in its cot;  
And the sun knew not, and the face knew not  
    That soon they would no more meet.

Now that the grave has shut its door,  
    And lets not in one ray,  
Do they wonder that they meet no more—  
That face and its beaming visitor—  
    That met so many a day?

*December 1915.*

## IN A LONDON FLAT

### I

“You look like a widower,” she said  
Through the folding-doors with a laugh from the bed,  
As he sat by the fire in the outer room,  
Reading late on a night of gloom,  
And a cab-hack’s wheeze, and the clap of its feet  
In its breathless pace on the smooth wet street,  
Were all that came to them now and then. . . .  
“You really do!” she quizzed again.

### II

And the Spirits behind the curtains heard,  
And also laughed, amused at her word,  
And at her light-hearted view of him.  
“Let’s get him made so—just for a whim!”  
Said the Phantom Ironic. “ ’Twould serve her right  
If we coaxed the Will to do it some night.”  
“O pray not!” pleaded the younger one,  
The Sprite of the Pities. “She said it in fun!”

### III

But so it befell, whatever the cause,  
That what she had called him he next year was;  
And on such a night, when she lay elsewhere,  
He, watched by those Phantoms, again sat there,  
And gazed, as if gazing on far faint shores,  
At the empty bed through the folding-doors  
As he remembered her words; and wept  
That she had forgotten them where she slept.

## DRAWING DETAILS IN AN OLD CHURCH

I HEAR the bell-rope sawing,  
And the oil-less axle grind,  
As I sit alone here drawing  
What some Gothic brain designed ;  
And I catch the toll that follows  
    From the lagging bell,  
Ere it spreads to hills and hollows  
    Where people dwell.

I ask not whom it tolls for,  
Incurious who he be ;  
So, some morrow, when those knolls for  
One unguessed, sound out for me,  
A stranger, loitering under  
    In nave or choir,  
May think, too, " Whose, I wonder ?  
    But not inquire.

## RAKE-HELL MUSES

YES ; since she knows not need,  
Nor walks in blindness,  
I may without unkindness  
This true thing tell :

Which would be truth, indeed,  
Though worse in speaking,  
Were her poor footsteps seeking  
A pauper's cell.

I judge, then, better far  
She now have sorrow,  
Than gladness that to-morrow  
Might know its knell.—

It may be men there are  
Could make of union  
A lifelong sweet communion  
Or passioned spell ;

But *I*, to save her name  
And bring salvation  
By altar-affirmation  
And bridal bell ;

I, by whose rash unshame  
These tears come to her :—  
My faith would more undo her  
Than my farewell !

## RAKE-HELL MUSES

Chained to me, year by year  
My moody madness  
Would make her olden gladness  
An intermell.

She'll take the ill that's near,  
And bear the blaming.  
'Twill pass. Full soon her shaming  
They'll cease to yell.

Our unborn, first her moan,  
Will grow her guerdon,  
Until from blot and burden  
A joyance swell;

In that therein she'll own  
My good part wholly,  
My evil staining solely  
My own vile fell.

Of the disgrace, may be  
"He shunned to share it,  
Being false," they'll say. I'll bear it;  
Time will dispel

The calumny, and prove  
This much about me,  
That she lives best without me  
Who would live well.

That, this once, not self-love  
But good intention  
Pleads that against convention  
We two rebel.

For, is one moonlight dance,  
One midnight passion,  
A rock whereon to fashion  
Life's citadel?

## RAKE-HELL MUSES

Prove they their power to prance  
Life's miles together  
From upper slope to nether  
Who trip an ell?

—Years hence, or now apace,  
May tongues be calling  
News of my further falling  
Sinward pell-mell :

Then this great good will grace  
Our lives' division,  
She's saved from more misprision  
Though I plumb hell.

## THE COLOUR

*(The following lines are partly original, partly remembered from a Wessex folk-rhyme)*

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will white do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —White is for weddings,  
Weddings, weddings,  
White is for weddings,  
And that won’t do.”

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will red do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Red is for soldiers,  
Soldiers, soldiers,  
Red is for soldiers,  
And that won’t do.”

“ What shall I bring you ?  
Please will blue do  
Best for your wearing  
The long day through ? ”  
“ —Blue is for sailors,  
Sailors, sailors,  
Blue is for sailors,  
And that won’t do.”

## MURMURS IN THE GLOOM

“Live there no heedful ones of searching sight,  
Whose accents might be oracles that smite  
To hinder those who frowardly  
Conduct us, and untowardly ;  
To lead the nations vawardly  
From gloom to light?”

*September 22, 1899.*

## EPITAPH

I NEVER cared for Life : Life cared for me,  
And hence I owed it some fidelity.  
It now says, "Cease ; at length thou hast learnt to  
grind  
Sufficient toll for an unwilling mind,  
And I dismiss thee—not without regard  
That thou didst ask no ill-advised reward,  
Nor sought in me much more than thou couldst find."

## AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

WHERE once we danced, where once we sang,  
Gentlemen,

The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,  
And cracks creep; worms have fed upon  
The doors. Yea, sprightlier times were then  
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,  
Gentlemen!

Where once we rowed, where once we sailed,  
Gentlemen,

And damsels took the tiller, veiled  
Against too strong a stare (God wot  
Their fancy, then or anywhen !)  
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,  
Gentlemen!

We have lost somewhat, afar and near,  
Gentlemen,

The thinning of our ranks each year  
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,  
That we shall not be ever again  
The marked of many, loved of one,  
Gentlemen.

In dance the polka hit our wish,  
Gentlemen,

The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,  
"Sir Roger."—And in opera spheres  
The "Girl" (the famed "Bohemian"),  
And "Trovatore," held the ears,  
Gentlemen.

## AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

This season's paintings do not please,  
Gentlemen,  
Like Etty, Mulready, Maclise ;  
Throbbing romance has waned and wanned ;  
No wizard wields the witching pen  
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas, and Sand,  
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,  
Gentlemen,  
Is roof-wrecked ; damps there drip upon  
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust,  
The spider is sole denizen ;  
Even she who voiced those rhymes is dust,  
Gentlemen !

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,  
Gentlemen,  
Are wearing weary. We are old ;  
These younger press ; we feel our rout  
Is imminent to Aides' den,—  
That evening shades are stretching out,  
Gentlemen !

And yet, though ours be failing frames,  
Gentlemen,  
So were some others' history names,  
Who trode their track light-limbed and fast  
As these youth, and not alien  
From enterprise, to their long last,  
Gentlemen.

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,  
Gentlemen,  
Pythagoras, Thucydides,  
Herodotus, and Homer,—yea,  
Clement, Augustin, Origen,  
Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,

## AN ANCIENT TO ANCIENTS

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed ; list,  
Gentlemen ;  
Much is there waits you we have missed ;  
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,  
Much, much has lain outside our ken :  
Nay, rush not : time serves : we are going,  
Gentlemen.

AFTER READING PSALMS XXXIX.,  
XL., ETC.

SIMPLE was I and was young ;  
Kept no gallant tryst, I ;  
Even from good words held my tongue,  
*Quoniam Tu fecisti !*

Through my youth I stirred me not,  
High adventure missed I,  
Left the shining shrines unsought ;  
Yet—*me deduxisti !*

At my start by Helicon  
Love-lore little wist I,  
Worldly less ; but footed on ;  
*Why ? Me suscepisti !*

When I failed at fervid rhymes,  
“ Shall,” I said, “ persist I ? ”  
“ *Dies* ” (I would add at times)  
“ *Meos posuisti !* ”

So I have fared through many suns ;  
Sadly little grist I  
Bring my mill, or any one’s,  
*Domine, Tu scisti !*

And at dead of night I call :  
“ Though to prophets list I,  
Which hath understood at all ?  
Yea : *Quem elegisti ?* ”

## SURVIEW

“Cogitavi vias meas”

A CRY from the green-grained sticks of the fire  
Made me gaze where it seemed to be :  
'Twas my own voice talking therefrom to me  
On how I had walked when my sun was higher—  
My heart in its arrogancy.

“ *You held not to whatsoever was true,*”  
Said my own voice talking to me :  
“ *Whatsoever was just you were slack to see;*  
*Kept not things lovely and pure in view,*”  
Said my own voice talking to me.

“ *You slighted her that endureth all,*”  
Said my own voice talking to me ;  
“ *Vaunteth not, trusteth hopefully;*  
*That suffereth long and is kind withal,*”  
Said my own voice talking to me.

“ *You taught not that which you set about,*”  
Said my own voice talking to me ;  
“ *That the greatest of things is Charity. . . .*”  
—And the sticks burnt low, and the fire went out,  
And my voice ceased talking to me.

THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY  
OF THE  
QUEEN OF CORNWALL  
AT TINTAGEL IN LYONNESSE  
A NEW VERSION OF AN OLD STORY ARRANGED  
AS A PLAY FOR MUMMERS, IN ONE ACT,  
REQUIRING NO THEATRE OR SCENERY

“Isot ma drue, Isot m’amie,  
En vos ma mort, en vos ma vie !”

(?) THE MONK THOMAS, *circa* 1200 A.D.



IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE  
OF THOSE WITH WHOM I FORMERLY SPENT  
MANY HOURS AT  
THE SCENE OF THE TRADITION,  
WHO HAVE NOW ALL PASSED AWAY  
SAVE ONE.

E. L. H.

C. H.

H. C. H.

F. E. H.



## CHARACTERS

MARK, KING OF CORNWALL.

SIR TRISTRAM.

SIR ANDRET.

Other Knights.

Squires.

Messenger.

Herald.

Watchman.

Retainers, Musicians, etc.

ISEULT THE FAIR, QUEEN OF CORNWALL.

ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED.

DAME BRANGWAIN.

Damsel.

The Queen's Attendants, Bowerwomen, etc.

SHADES OF DEAD OLD CORNISH MEN }  
SHADES OF DEAD CORNISH WOMEN } *Chanters.*

MERLIN.

The Time covered by the events is about the Time of representation.

*The Stage is any large room; round or at the end of which the audience sits. It is assumed to be the interior of the Great Hall of Tintagel Castle: that the floor is strewn with rushes: that there is an arch in the back-centre (a doorway or other opening may counterfeit this) through which the Atlantic is visible across an outer ward and over the ramparts of the stronghold: that a door is on the left, and one on the right (curtains, screens or chairs may denote these): that a settle spread with skins is among the moveables: that above at the back is a gallery (which may be represented by any elevated piece of furniture on which two actors can stand, in a corner of the room screened off).*

■ Should the performance take place in an ordinary theatre, the aforesaid imaginary surroundings may be supplied by imitative scenery.

*The costumes of the players are the conventional ones of bright linen fabrics, trimmed with ribbon, as in the old mumming shows; though on a constructed stage they may be more realistic.*

## PROLOGUE

*Enter MERLIN, a phantasmal figure with a white wand. The room is darkened: a blue light may be thrown on Merlin.*

### MERLIN

I come, at your persuasive call,  
To raise up in this modern hall  
A tragedy of dire duresse  
That vexed the land of Lyonnese:—  
Scenes, with their passions, hopes, and fears  
Sunk into shade these thousand years;  
To set, in ghostly grave array,  
    Their blitheness, blood, and tears,  
Feats, ardours, as if rife to-day  
    Before men's eyes and ears.

The tale has travelled far and wide:—  
Yea, that King Mark, to fetch his bride,  
Sent Tristram; then that he and she  
Quaffed a love-potion witlessly  
While homeward bound. Hence that the King  
    Wedded one heart-aflame  
For Tristram! He, in dark despair,  
Roved recklessly, and wived elsewhere  
    One of his mistress' name.

I saw these times I represent,  
Watched, gauged them as they came and went,  
Being ageless, deathless! And those two  
Fair women—namesakes—well I knew!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Judge them not harshly in a love  
Whose hold on them was strong ;  
Sorrow therein they tasted of,  
And deeply, and too long !

[*Exit.*

## SCENE I

SHADES OF DEAD OLD  
CORNISH MEN  
SHADES OF DEAD  
CORNISH WOMEN } CHANTERS } *Right and left  
in Front.*

CHANTERS : MEN (*in recitative*)

Tristram a captive of King Mark,  
Racked was the Queen with qualm and cark,  
Till reached her hand a written line,  
That quickened her to deft design.

CHANTERS : WOMEN

Then, Tristram out, and Mark shut in,  
The Queen and Tristram winged to win  
Gard Castle, where, without annoy,  
Monthswhile they lodged in matchless joy !

CHANTERS : MEN

Anon, when Queen Iseult had homed,  
Brittany-wards Sir Tristram roamed.  
To greet his waiting wife,  
White-handed Iseult, whom the Queen  
Had recked not of. But soon, in teen  
And troublous inner strife,  
She Tristram of her soul besought  
By wringing letters rapid-wrought  
(The King gone hunting, knowing nought)  
To come again to her

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Even at the cost—such was her whim—  
Of bringing Whitehands back with him  
In wifely character.

### CHANTERS : WOMEN

There was no answer. Rest she could not ;  
Then we missed her, days. We would not  
    Think where she might have been.  
And having sailed, maybe, twice ten  
Long leagues, here came she back again,  
And sad and listless—just as when  
    She went—abides her mien !

### CHANTERS : M. AND W.

Hist ! . . . Lo ; there by the nether gate  
New comers hail ! O who should wait  
The postern door to enter by,  
    The bridge being clearly seen ?  
The King returned ?—But that way ; why ?  
Would he try trap his Queen ?

WATCHMAN (*crossing without the archway*)

The King's arriving ! Ho !

*Enter HERALD. Sounds a trumpet.*  
*Enter BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE II

HERALD, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS

HERALD

The King's at hand !

BRANGWAIN

God's grace, she's home, either from far or near !

HERALD

Whither plied she ? Many would like to hear !

CHANTERS : M. AND W.

We do not know. We will not know.  
She took a ship from the shore below,  
And was gone many days.  
By friending winds she's back before him :  
Extol God should she and adore Him  
For covering up her ways !

*Enter KING MARK with SIR ANDRET and other Knights, Retinue, and rude music of ram's-horns, crouds, and humstrums, BRANGWAIN standing aside.*

## SCENE III

KING MARK, KNIGHTS, RETINUE, ETC., BRANGWAIN,  
AND CHANTERS

K. MARK

Where is the Queen?

*Drinks from a gold flagon<sup>1</sup> which has been standing on the hearth on a brandise. Retinue drink after him from the same.*

BRANGWAIN (*advancing*)

Sir King, the Queen attires  
To meet your Majesty, and now comes down.  
(*Aside.*) Haply he will not know.

*Enter QUEEN ISEULT THE FAIR attended,  
and followed by the hound HOUDAIN.*

<sup>1</sup> A vessel of hammered gold, considered to date from Arthurian times, was found in Cornwall in 1837.

## SCENE IV

QUEEN ISEULT, KING MARK, KNIGHTS, BRANGWAIN,  
ETC., AND CHANTERS

(QUEEN ISEULT *has dark hair, and wears a crimson robe, and tiara or circlet.*)

MARK smacks the QUEEN on her shoulders in rough greeting.

K. MARK

Why is this brachet in the hall again?

Q. ISEULT

I know not how she came here.

K. MARK

Nay, my wife,  
Thou dost know well—as I know women well!—  
And know her owner more than well, I reckon,  
And that he left the beast to your regard.

*He kicks the dog away.*

SIR ANDRET (*aside to K. MARK*)

Aye, aye, great King, thou speakest wisely on't  
This time as ever. Wives dost thrid all through!

[*Exeunt severally KNIGHTS, RETINUE, ETC., and BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE V

KING MARK, QUEEN ISEULT, AND CHANTERS

Q. ISEULT

I've not beheld of late the man you mean;  
Maybe, my lord, you have shut him in the dungeon,  
As you did formerly!

K. MARK

You spell me better!

And know he has felt full liberty for long,  
And that you would have seen him, and much more,  
Had not debarred you one o' those crosses which,  
Happily, dash unlawful lovers' schemes  
No less than sanct intents. If that good knight  
Dallies in Brittany with his good wife—  
So finger-white—to cheer her as he ought  
'Tis clear he can't be here.

Q. ISEULT (*with slight sarcasm*)

'Tis clear. You plead  
Somewhat in waste to prove as much. But, faith,  
(*petulantly*) 'Twas she, times tireless, quirked and  
called to him  
Or he would not have gone!

K. MARK

Ah, know'st thou that!  
Leave her alone, a woman lets all out!  
Well, I may know things too. I slipped in sly

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

When I came home by now, and lit on this :  
That while I've sued the chase you followed him,  
Vanishing on a voyage of some days,  
Which you'd fain cloak from me, and have confessed  
To no one, either, of my people here.

Q. ISEULT (*evasively*)

I chose to take the air, being qualmed to death.  
Surely a queen is dowered with such degree  
Of queenship, or what is't to be a queen?  
No foot, I swear, set I in Brittany,  
Or upon soil of any neighbour shore,  
'Twixt putting from the cove below these walls  
And my return hereto.

K. MARK

Protests—no more !  
You sailed off somewhere—(so a sea-nath<sup>1</sup> hints me  
That heeds the tidings every troubled billow  
Wails to the Beeny-Sisters from Pen-Tyre)—  
At risk, too, of your life, the ship being small,  
And trickful tempests lurking in the skies.  
A woman does not raise a mast for nought  
On a cockle-shell, even be the sea-signs fair.  
But I have scorned to ask the mariners  
The course you kept—or north, or south, or what—  
It might have been to Brittany, it might not !

Q. ISEULT

I have not seen him.

K. MARK

Well, you might have done't  
Each sunrise, noon, or eve, for all the joy

<sup>1</sup> *nath*, a puffin (Cornish).

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

You show in my return, or gladness wont  
To a queen shore-reached in safety—so they tell me—  
Since you crept cat-like home.

Q. ISEULT (*indignantly*)

I saw him not!

You stifle speech in me, or I'd have launched,  
Ere this, the tidings rife. See him no more  
Shall I, or you. He's gone. Death darkens him!

K. MARK (*starting*)

So much the better, if true—for us and him!

(*She weeps.*)

But no. He has died too many, many times  
For that report to hold! In tilts, in frays,  
Through slits and loops, louvres and battlements,  
Has he been pierced and arrowed to the heart,  
Then risen up again to trouble me!  
Sir Andret told, ere Tristram shunned Tintagel,  
How he espied you dallying—you and he—  
Near the shot-window southward. And I went  
With glaive in hand to smite him. Would I had!  
Yea, and I should have done it, limbed him sunder,  
Had I been boldly backed; but not a knight  
Was near to second me.—Where are they now?  
Whence comes this quietude?—I'll call a council:  
What's best to do with him I'll learn thereat,  
And then we'll keep a feast. A council! Ho!

[*Exit KING MARK.*

## SCENE VI

QUEEN ISEULT AND CHANTERS

*The Queen sits in dejection.*

CHANTERS: MEN

Why did Heaven warrant, in its whim,  
A twain mismated should bedim  
The courts of their encompassment  
With bleeding loves and discontent!  
Who would not feel God favoured them,  
Past wish, in throne and diadem?  
And that for all His plaisirance they would praise  
Him upon earth throughout their deeds and days!

CHANTERS: WOMEN

Instead, see King and Queen more curst  
Than beggars upon holt orhurst:—  
A queen! One who each night and morn  
Sighs for Sir Tristram; him, gloom-born  
In his mother's death, and reared mid vows  
Of poison by a later spouse:  
In love Fate-haunted, doomed to drink  
Charmed philtres, melting every link  
Of purposed faith! Why wedded he  
King Howel's lass of Brittany?  
Why should the wave have washed him to her  
shore—  
Him, prone to love our Queen here more and more?

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

CHANTERS: M. AND W.

In last misfortune did he well-nigh slay  
Unknowingly in battle Arthur! Ay,  
Our stainless Over-King of Counties—he  
Made Dux Bellorum for his valiancy!—  
If now, indeed, Tristram be chilled in death,  
Will she, the Queen, care aught for further breath?

Q. ISEULT (*musing*)

How little he knows, does Mark! And yet, how much?  
Can there be any groundage for his thought  
That Tristram's not a ghost? O, no such hope!  
My Tristram, yet not mine! Could it be deemed  
Thou shouldst have loved me less in many years  
Hadst thou enjoyed them? If in Christland now  
Do you look down on *her* most, or on *me*?  
Why should the King have grudged so fleet a life  
Its pleasure, grinned with gall at its renown,  
Yapped you away for too great love of me,  
Spied on thee through his myrmidons—aye, encloaked  
And peeped to frustrate thee, and sent the word  
To kill thee who should meet thee? O sweet Lord,  
Thou hast made him hated; yet he still has life;  
While Tristram. . . . Why said Mark he doubtless  
lived?  
—But he was ever a mocker, was King Mark,  
And not far from a coward.

*Enter BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE VII

QUEEN ISEULT, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS

Q. ISEULT (*distractedly*)

Brangwain, he hard denies I did not see him!  
But he is dead! . . . Perhaps not. . . . Can it be?

BRANGWAIN

Who doth deny, my Queen? Who is not dead?  
Your words are blank to me; your manner strange.

Q. ISEULT

One bleeds no more on earth for a full-fledged sin  
Than for a callow! The King has found out now  
My sailing the south water in his absence,  
And weens the worst. Forsooth, it's always so!  
He will not credit I'd no cause to land  
For the black reason—it is no excuse—  
That Tristram, knight, had died!—Landed had I,  
Aye, fifty times, could he have still been there,  
Even there with her.—My Love, my own lost Love!  
(*She bends down.*)

BRANGWAIN

You did not land in Brittany, O Queen?

Q. ISEULT

I did not land, Brangwain, although so near.

—He had been long with his White-handed one,  
(*She pauses.*)

## THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF

And had fallen sick of fever nigh to death ;  
Till she grew fearful for him ; sent for me,  
Yea, choicelessly, at his light-headed calls  
And midnight repetitions of my name.  
Yes, sent for me in a despairing hope  
To save him at all cost.

### BRANGWAIN

She must, methinks,  
Have loved him much !

Q. ISEULT (*impatiently*)

Don't speak, Brangwain, but hear me.  
Yes : women are so . . . For me, I could not bear  
To lose him thus. Love, others' freakful dainty,  
Is my starved, all-day meal ! And favouring chance,  
That of the King's apt absence, tempted me ;  
And hence I sailed, despite the storm-strid air.  
What did I care about myself, or aught ?  
—She'd told the mariner her messenger  
To hoist his canvas white if he bore me  
On the backward journey, black if he did not,  
That, so, heart-ease should reach the knight full quick—  
Even ere I landed—quick as I hove in sight.  
Yes, in his peril so profound, she sent  
The message, though against her. Women are so !

### BRANGWAIN

Some are, my lady Queen : some may not be.

Q. ISEULT

Brangwain, I would you did not argue so.—  
While we were yet a two-hours' toss from port  
I bade them show the sheet, as had been asked,  
The which they did. But when we touched the quay  
She ran down thither, beating both her hands,  
And saying Tristram died an hour before.

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

BRANGWAIN

But O, dear Queen, didst fully credit her ?

Q. ISEULT

Aye ! Sudden-shaken souls guess not at guile.—  
I fell into a faint at the very words.—  
Thereon they lifted me into the cabin,  
Saying : “ She shall not foot this deadly land ! ”  
When I again knew life I was distraught,  
And sick with the rough writhing of the bark.—  
They had determined they would steer me home,  
Had turned the prow, and toiled a long league back ;  
Strange that, no sooner had they put about,  
The weather worsed, as if they’d angered God  
By doing what they had done to sever me  
Even from my Love’s dead limbs ! No gleam glowed  
more,  
And the seas sloped like houseroofs all the way.  
We were blown north along the shore to Wales,  
Where they made port and nursed me, till, next day,  
The blinding gale abated : we returned,  
And reached by shifts at last the cove below.  
The King, whose queries I had feared so much,  
Had not come back ; came only at my heels ;  
Yet he has learnt, somewise, that I’ve been missed,  
And doubtless I shall suffer—he’s begun it !  
Much I lament I bent astern so soon.  
I should have landed, and have gained his corpse.

BRANGWAIN

She is his wife, and you could not have claimed it.

Q. ISEULT

But could I not have seen him ? How know you ?

## THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF

### BRANGWAIN

Nay: she might not have let you even see him :  
He is her own, dear Queen, and in her land  
You had no sway to make her cede him up.  
I doubt his death. You took her word for it,  
And she was desperate at the sight of you.  
Sick unto death he may have been. But—dead?  
(*Shakes her head.*)  
Corpses are many : man lives half-amort ;  
But rumour makes them more when they run short !

### Q. ISEULT

If he be not ! O I would even condone  
His bringing her, would he not come without ;  
I've said it ever since I've known of her.  
Could he but live : yes, could he live for me !

Q. ISEULT *sings sadly to herself, BRANGWAIN having gone to the back of the hall :*

Could he but live for me  
A day, yea, even an hour,  
Its petty span would be  
Steeped in felicity  
Passing the price of Heaven's held-dearest dower :  
Could he but live, could *he*  
But live for me !

Could he but come to me  
Amid these murks that lour,  
My hollow life would be  
So brimmed with ecstasy  
As heart-dry honeysuck by summer shower :  
Could he but come, could he  
But come to me !

[*Exit Q. ISEULT, followed by BRANGWAIN.*

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

### CHANTERS : WOMEN

Maybe, indeed, he did not die !  
Our sex, shame on't, is over prone  
To ill conceits that amplify.  
Maybe he did not die—that one,  
The Whitepalmed, may in strategy  
Have but avowed it ! Weak are we,  
And foil and fence too often seek,  
Aye, even by guile, if fear so speak !

### CHANTERS : MEN

Wounded in Ireland, life he fetched,  
In charge of the King's daughter there,  
Who healed him, loved him, primed him fair  
For the great tournament, when he stretched  
Sir Palomides low.

### CHANTERS : WOMEN

Yet slight  
Was King Mark's love for him, despite !  
Mark sent him thither as to gain  
Iseult, but, truly, to be slain !

### CHANTERS : MEN

Quite else her father, who on sight  
Was fain for Tristram as his son,  
Not Mark. But woe, his word was won !  
Alas, should vow so wrongful stand as right ?

### CHANTERS : WOMEN

And what Dame Brangwain did to mend,  
Enlarged the mischief ! Best have penned  
That love-drink close, since 'twas to be  
Iseult should wed where promised : wretched she !

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

CHANTERS: M. AND W.

Yet, haply, Tristram lives. Quick heals are his!  
He rose revived from that: why not from this?

WATCHMAN (*without*)

One comes with tidings!—(*to the comer*) Bear them  
to the hall.

*Enter a Messenger (at back), pausing and looking  
round. QUEEN ISEULT, attended, re-enters (at  
front) and seats herself.*

## SCENE VIII

QUEEN ISEULT, ATTENDANT-LADIES, MESSENGER,  
AND CHANTERS

MESSENGER (*coming forward*)

Where is Iseult the Queen ?

Q. ISEULT.

Here, churl. I'm she.

MESSENGER (*abashed*)

I'm sent here to deliver tidings, Queen,  
To your high ear alone.

[*Exeunt Attendants.*

Q. ISEULT (*in strung-up tones*)

Then voice them forth.  
A halter for thee if I find them false !

MESSENGER

Knight Tristram of the sorry birth is yet  
Enrolled among the living, having crept  
Out of the very vaults of death and doom !  
—His heavy ails bedimmed him numb as night,  
And men conceived him wrapt in wakeless rest ;  
But he strove back. Hither, on swifter keel  
He has followed you ; and even now is nigh.

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

(QUEEN ISEULT *leans back and covers her eyes.*)

Iseult the Pale-palmed, in her jealousy,  
With false deliverance feigned your sail was black,  
And made him pray for death in his extreme,  
Till sank he to a drowse : grey death they thought it,  
And bells were bidden toll the churches through,  
And thereupon you came. Scared at her crime  
She deemed that it had dealt him death indeed,  
And knew her not at fault till you had gone.

—When he aroused, and learnt she had sent you back,  
It angered him to hot extremity,  
And brings him here upon my very stern,  
If he, forsooth, have haleness for the adventure.

[*Exit Messenger.*

Q. ISEULT

O it o'eturns! . . . "Black" told she! Cheat unmatchable!

TRISTRAM heard off, singing and harping in the distance.

*Enter BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE IX

QUEEN ISEULT, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS.  
THEN KING MARK AND SIR ANDRET

BRANGWAIN

There stands a strange old harper down below,  
Who does not look Sir Tristram, yet recalls him.

KING MARK *crosses the ward outside the arch.*

KING MARK

*(speaking off, and shading his eyes)*

What traveller's that, slow mounting to the wall,  
Scanning its strength, with curious halting crawl,  
As knowing not Tintagel's Towers at all?

WATCHMAN *(crossing without)*

'Tis but a minstrel from afar, Sir King,  
Harping for alms, or aught that chance may bring.

Q. ISEULT *(starting up)*

It must be he!

SIR TRISTRAM'S steps heard approaching. He enters,  
disguised as a harper.

KING MARK

*(glancing back casually at SIR TRISTRAM, in going off)*

Dole him his alms in Christ's name, if ye must,  
And irk me not while setting to bowse with these.

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

*[Exit KING MARK from the outside to the banqueting-hall, followed across the back of the arch by Knights, etc., including SIR ANDRET.]*

SIR ANDRET (*to himself as he goes*)

That harper struck me oddly! . . . In his gait—  
Well: till the beakers have gone round I'll wait.

*[Exit behind the others.]*

## SCENE X

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS

### TRISTRAM

My Queen and best belov'd! At last again!

*(He throws off the cloak that disguises him.)*

—Know I was duped by her who dons your name;

She swore the bellied sheeting of your ship

Blotted the wind-wafts like a sable swan;

And being so weak from my long lying there

I sank to senselessness at the wisht words—

So contrary to hope! Whilst I was thus

She sallied out, and sent you home forthwith!

Anon I poured my anger on her head,

Till, in high fear of me, she quivered white.

—I mended swiftly, stung by circumstance,

And rose and left her there, and followed you.

Sir Kay lent aidance, and has come with me.

### BRANGWAIN

I'll out and watch the while Sir Tristram's here.

[*Exit* BRANGWAIN.]

## SCENE XI

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, AND CHANTERS

Q. ISEULT

You've come again, you've come again, dear Love!

TRISTRAM

To be once more with my Iseult the Fair,  
*(He embraces the Queen.)*

Though not yet what I was in strength and stay.  
Yet told have I been by Sir Launcelot  
To ware me of King Mark! King Fox he calls him—  
Whom I'd have pitied, though he would not yield thee,  
Nor let you loose on learning our dire need  
Of freedom for our bliss, which came to us  
Not of fore-aim or falseness, but by spell  
Of love-drink, ministered by hand unseen!

Q. ISEULT

Knowing as much, he swore he would not slay thee,  
But Launcelot told him no man could believe him,  
Whereat he answered: "Anyhow she's mine!"

TRISTRAM

It's true, I fear. He cannot be believed.

Q. ISEULT

Yet, Tristram, would my husband were but all!  
Had you not wedded her my namesake, Oh,

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

We could have steered around this other rock—  
Trust me we could ! Why did you do it, why !  
Triumph did he when first I learnt of that,  
And lewdly laughed to see me shaken so.

### TRISTRAM

You have heard the tale of my so mating her .  
Twice told, and yet anew ! Must I again ?  
It was her sire King Howel brought it round  
In brunt of battle, when I saved his lands.  
He said to me : " Thou hast done generously :  
I crave to make thee recompense ! My daughter,  
The last best bloom of Western Monarchy—  
Iseult of the White Hand the people call her—  
Is thine. I give thee her. O take her then,  
The chief of all things priceless unto me !"  
Overcome was I by the fiery fray,  
Arrested by her name—so kin to yours—  
His ardour, zeal. I thought : " Maybe her spouse,  
By now, has haled my Iseult's heart from me,"  
And took the other blindly. That is all.

### Q. ISEULT

A woman's heart has room for one alone ;  
A man's for two or three !

### TRISTRAM

Sweet ; 'twas but chance !

### Q. ISEULT (*sighing*)

Yet there may lie our doom ! . . . I had nerved myself  
To bid you come, and bring your wife with you.  
But that I did not mean. It was too much ;  
And yet I said it ! . . .

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

### TRISTRAM

Lean ye down, my Love :  
I'll touch to thee my very own old tune.  
I came in harper-guise, unweeting what  
The hazardry of our divided days  
Might have brought forth for us !

*He takes the harp. QUEEN ISEULT reclines.*

### TRISTRAM (*singing*)

Let's meet again to-night, my Fair,  
Let's meet unseen of all ;  
The day-god labours to his lair,  
And then the evenfall !

O living lute, O lily-rose,  
O form of fantasie,  
When torches waste and warders doze  
Steal to the stars will we !

While nodding knights carouse at meat  
And shepherds shamble home,  
We'll cleave in close embracements—sweet  
As honey in the comb !

Till crawls the dawn from Condol's crown,  
And over Neitan's Kieve,  
As grimly ghosts we conjure down  
And hopes still weave and weave !

### WATCHMAN (*crossing without*)

A ship sheers round, and brings up in the bay !

*Re-enter BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE XII

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS

BRANGWAIN

My Queen, the shingle shaves another keel,  
And who the comer is we fail to guess.  
Its build bespeaks it from the Breton coasts,  
And those upon it shape of the Breton sort,  
And the figure near the prow is white-attired.

Q. ISEULT

What manner of farer does the figure show?

BRANGWAIN

My Lady, when I cast eye waterwards  
From the arrow-loop, just as the keel ground in  
Against the popplestones, it seemed a woman's;  
But she was wimpled close.

Q. ISEULT

I'll out and see.

QUEEN ISEULT opens the door to the banqueting-hall, and stands in the doorway still visible to the audience. Through the door comes the noise of trenchers, platters, cups, drunken voices, songs, etc., from the adjoining apartment, where KING MARK is dining with Knights and Retainers.

THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

VOICE OF K. MARK (*in liquor*)

Queen, whither goest thou? Pray plague me not  
While keeping table. Hath the old knave left,  
He with his balladry we heard by now  
Strum up to thee?

Q. ISEULT

I go to the pleasance only,  
Across your feasting-hall for shortness' sake,  
Returning hither soon.

VOICE OF K. MARK

Yea, have thy way,  
As women will!

VOICE OF SIR ANDRET

Aye, hence the need to spy them!

[*Exeunt* QUEEN ISEULT and BRANGWAIN *through*  
*banqueting-hall to the outside of the Castle.*

VOICE OF K. MARK

Faith, yes. Slip forth and see what may be toward  
With her and her lays of love and tinkling strings!

VOICE OF SIR ANDRET

I'll go, Sir King, wilt give me licence first  
To see the bottom of another cup.

*Noise of cups, trenchers, drunken voices, songs, etc.,  
resumed till the door shuts, when it is heard in  
subdued tones.*

## SCENE XIII

### TRISTRAM AND CHANTERS

TRISTRAM

(*going and looking seaward through arch*)

A woman's shape in white. . . . Can it be she?  
Would she in sooth, then, risk to follow me?

CHANTERS: MEN

O Tristram, thou are not to find  
Such solace for a shaken mind  
As seemed to wait thee here!

CHANTERS: WOMEN

One seised of right to trace thy track  
Hath crossed the sea to win thee back  
In love and faith and fear!

CHANTERS: M. AND W.

From this newcomer wis we pain  
Ere thou canst know sweet spells again,  
O knight of little cheer!

TRISTRAM

I cannot halt here, nerve-strained like a lute-string;  
I must fain storm the truth!

[*Exit TRISTRAM.*

*Enter SIR ANDRET (looking about him).*

## SCENE XIV

SIR ANDRET AND CHANTERS,  
THEN ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED

SIR ANDRET

She's scheming nothing here that I discern,  
But things are schemed without a man's discerning!

*Enter ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED. She has corn-brown hair, and wears a white robe. She starts at seeing SIR ANDRET and speaks confusedly.*

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

I saw them coming down to learn my errand,  
And crept up by the rear-path, to avoid them  
Till I'd disclosed to Tristram. . . .

SIR ANDRET

Who may you be, good lady? feather-shaken  
Like a far bird stray-blown. And what's your lack?  
Why, you are verily—

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

I come to learn if Tristram, that good Knight,  
Is held within these bold embastioned walls.  
I'm his much sorrowed wife—Iseult of Brittany.

SIR ANDRET

Ah; Tristram, then, is here? I shrewdly guessed it!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

I deem I scarce should tell. Yet, as I think,  
You are his friend?

SIR ANDRET (*dryly*)

In a true sense I am;  
Friend for his good. I leave you here to wait.  
(*Aside*) It *was* he, then!—The King shall be let know  
A short while onward, when he's plumply primed!

[*Exit* SIR ANDRET.]

## SCENE XV

ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED AND CHANTERS.  
THEN TRISTRAM

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

Have I done mischief? Maybe so, alas,  
To one I would not harm the littlest jot!

*Re-enter TRISTRAM*

I could not help it, O my husband! Yea  
I have dogged you close; I could not bear your rage;  
And Heaven has favoured me! The sea smiled  
smooth

The whole way over, and the sun shone kind.  
Your sail was eyesome fair in front of me,  
And I steered just behind, all stealthfully!  
—Forgive me that I spoke untruly to you,  
And then to her, in my bruised brain's turmoil.  
But, in a way of saying, you were dead;  
You seemed so—in a dead drowse when she came.  
And I did send for her at your entreaty;  
But flesh is frail. Centred is woman's love,  
And knows no breadth. I could not let her land,  
I could not let her come!

TRISTRAM

Your speech is nought,  
O evil woman, who didst nearly witch  
The death of this Queen, saying such of me!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

### ISEULT THE WHITE H.

Forgive me, do forgive, my lord, my husband !  
I love, have loved you so imperishably ;  
Not with fleet flame at times, as some do use !  
Had I once been unfaithful, even perverse,  
I would have held some coldness fitly won ;  
But I have ever met your wryest whim  
With ready-wrought acceptance, matched your moods,  
Clasped hands, touched lips, and smiled devotedly ;  
So how should this have grown up unaware ?

*Enter QUEEN ISEULT and BRANGWAIN in the  
Gallery above, unperceived.*

## SCENE XVI

QUEEN ISEULT, BRANGWAIN, ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED,  
TRISTRAM, AND CHANTERS

Q. ISEULT

What do they say? And who is she, Brangwain?  
Not my suspicion hardened into mould  
Of flesh and blood indeed?

BRANGWAIN

I cannot hear.

TRISTRAM

I have no more to say or do with thee;  
I'd fade your face to strangeness in mine eyes!  
Your father dealt me illest turn in this,  
Your name, too, being the match of hers! Yea, thus  
I was coerced. I never more can be  
Your bed-mate—never again.

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

How, Tristram mine?  
What meaning mete you out by that to me?  
You only say it, do you? You are not,  
Cannot be, in true earnest—that I know!  
I hope you are not in earnest?—Surely I,  
This time as always, do belong to you,  
And you are going to keep me always yours?  
I thought you loved my name for me myself,

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Not for another ; or at the very least  
For sake of some dear sister or mother dead,  
And not, not—  
*(She breaks down.)*

### TRISTRAM

I spoke too rawly, maybe ; mouthed what I  
Ought only to have thought. But do you dream  
I for a leastness longer could abide  
Such dire disastrous lying ?—Back to your ship ;  
Get into it ; return by the aptest wind  
And mate with another man when thou canst find him,  
Never uncovering how you cozened me ;  
His temper might be tried thereby, as mine !

### ISEULT THE WHITE H.

No, no ! I won't be any other's wife !  
How can a thing so monstrous ever be ?

### TRISTRAM

If I had battened in Brittany with thee—

### ISEULT THE WHITE H.

But you don't *mean* you'll live away from me,  
Leave me, and henceforth be unknown to me,  
O you don't surely ? I could not help coming ;  
Don't send me away—do not, do not, do so !

*(Q. ISEULT above moves restlessly.)*

Forgive your Iseult for appearing here,  
Untoward seem it ! For I love you so  
Your sudden setting out was death to me  
When I discerned the cause. Your sail smalled down ;  
I should have died had I not followed you.  
Only, my Tristram, let me be with thee,  
And see thy face. I do not sue for more !

## THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF

Q. ISEULT (*above*)

She has no claim to importune like that,  
And gloss her hardihood in tracking him !

TRISTRAM

Thou canst not haunt another woman's house !

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

O yes I can, if there's no other way!  
I have heard she does not mind. I'd rather be  
Her bondwench, if I am not good enough  
To be your wife, than not stay here at all,—  
Aye, I, the child of kings and governors,  
As luminous in ancestral line as she,  
Say this, so utter my abasement now !  
—Something will happen if I go away  
Of import dark to you (no matter what  
To me); and we two should not greet again !  
—Could you but be the woman, I the man,  
I would not fly from you or banish you  
For fault so small as mine. O do not think  
It was so vile a thing. I wish—how much !—  
You could have told me twenty such untruths,  
That I might then have shown you *I* would not  
Rate them as faults, but be much joyed to have you  
In spite of all. If you but through and through  
Could spell me, know how staunch I have stood, and am,  
You'd love me just the same. Come, say you do,  
And let us not be severed so again.

Q. ISEULT (*above*)

I can't bear this !

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

All the long hours and days  
And heavy gnawing nights, and you not there,

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

But gone because you hate me! 'Tis past what  
A woman can endure!

TRISTRAM (*more gently*)

Not hate you, Iseult.  
But, hate or love, lodge here you cannot now:  
It's out of thinking.

(*Drunken revellers heard.*)

Know you, that in that room  
Just joining this, King Mark is holding feast,  
And may burst in with all his wassailers,  
And that the Queen—

Q. ISEULT (*above*)

He's softening to her. Come!  
Let us go down, and face his agony!

(QUEEN ISEULT and BRANGWAIN descend from the  
Gallery.)

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

O, I suppose I must not! And I am tired,  
Tired, tired! And now my once-dear Brittany home  
Is but a desert to me.

(Q. ISEULT and BRANGWAIN come forward.)

—Oh, the Queen!  
Can I—so weak—encounter—

Q. ISEULT

Ah—as I thought,  
Quite as I thought. It is my namesake, sure!

(ISEULT THE WHITE H. faints. *Indecision.* BRANG-  
WAIN goes to her.)  
Take her away. The blow that bruises her

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Is her own dealing. Better she had known  
The self-sown pangs of prying ere she sailed!

BRANGWAIN *carries her out, TRISTRAM suddenly assisting at the last moment as far as the door.*

CHANTERS : MEN (*as she is carried*)

Fluttering with fear,  
Out-tasked her strength has she!  
Loss of her Dear  
Threatening too clear,  
Gone to this length has she !  
Strain too severe !

## SCENE XVII

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, AND CHANTERS

Q. ISEULT (*after restlessly watching TRISTRAM render aid and return*)

So, after all, am I to share you, then,  
With another, Tristram ? who, I count, comes here  
To take the Castle as it were her own !

TRISTRAM

Sweet Queen, you said you'd let her come one day !  
However, back she's going to Brittany,  
Which she should not have left. Think kindly of her,  
A weaker one than you !

Q. ISEULT

What, Tristram ; what !  
O this from you to me, who have sacrificed  
Honour and name for you so long, so long !  
Why, she and I are oil and water here :  
Other than disunite we cannot be.  
She weaker ? Nay, I stand in jeopardy  
This very hour—

(*Noise of MARK and revellers.*)

Listen to him within !

His stare will pierce your cloak ere long—or would  
Were he but sober—then O where am I ?  
Better for us that I do yield you to her,  
And you depart ! Hardly can I do else :

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

In the eyes of men she has all claim to thee  
And I have none. Yes, she possesses you!—

(*Turning and speaking in a murmur.*)  
—Th'other Iseult possesses him, indeed ;  
And it was I who set it in his soul  
To seek her out!—my namesake, whom I felt  
A kindness for—alas, I know not why !

(*Sobs silently.*)

### CHANTERS : WOMEN

White-Hands did this,  
Desperate to win again  
Back to her kiss  
One she would miss !  
Yea, from his sin again  
Win, for her bliss !

### CHANTERS : M. AND W.

Dreams of the Queen  
Always possessing him  
Racked her yestreen  
Cruelly and keen—  
Him, once professing him  
Hers through Life's scene !

*Re-enter BRANGWAIN.*

## SCENE XVIII

TRISTRAM, QUEEN ISEULT, BRANGWAIN, AND CHANTERS

BRANGWAIN *stands silent a few moments, till Q. ISEULT turns and looks demandingly at her.*

BRANGWAIN

The lady from the other coast now mends.

Q. ISEULT (*haughtily*)

Give her good rest. (*Bitterly*) Yes, yes, in sooth I said  
That she might come. Put her in mine own bed:  
I'll sleep upon the floor!

[*Exit* BRANGWAIN.]

TRISTRAM

'Tis in your bitterness,  
My own sweet Queen, that you speak thus and thus!

*Enter KING MARK with SIR ANDRET to the Gallery,  
unperceived.*

## SCENE XIX

KING MARK AND SIR ANDRET (*above*):  
QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, AND CHANTERS

SIR ANDRET (*to K. MARK*)

See, here they are. God's 'ounds, sure, it was he,  
That harper I misdoubted once or twice ;  
But straight forgot again till I beheld  
His wife awaiting him below in tears,  
Who split the plot against your husbandhood  
While you have been at toss-cup with your knights,  
No mischief dreaming !

TRISTRAM

But, my best beloved,  
Forgo these frets, and think of Joyous Gard!  
(*Approaches her.*)

Q. ISEULT (*drawing back*)

Nay, no more claspings ! And if it should be  
That these new meetings operate on me  
(You well know what I am touching on in this)  
Mayhap by th'year's end I'll not be alive,  
The which I almost pray for—

K. MARK (*above*)

Yea, 'tis so !  
Their dalliances are in full gush again,  
Though I had deemed them hindered by his stay,  
And vastly talked-of ties, in Brittany.

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

### SIR ANDRET

Such is betokened, certes, by their words,  
If we but wit them straight.

### TRISTRAM

O Queen my Love,  
Pray sun away this cloud, and shine again ;  
Throw into your ripe voice and burning soul  
The music that they held in our aforetime :  
We shall outweather this !

(*Enter DAMSEL with a letter.*)  
Who jars us now ?

## SCENE XX

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, DAMSEL, KING MARK,  
SIR ANDRET, AND CHANTERS

DAMSEL (*humbly*)

This letter, brought at peril, noble Knight,  
King Mark has writ to our great Over-King—  
Aye, Arthur—I the bearer. And I said,  
“All that I *can* do for the brave Sir Tristram  
That do will I!” So I unsealed this scroll  
(A power that chances through a friendly clerk).  
In it he pens that as his baneful foe  
He holds Sir Tristram, and will wreak revenge  
Thrice through his loins and scale his heart from him  
As soon as hap may serve.

KING MARK *descends from Gallery and stands in the background, SIR ANDRET remaining above.*

Q. ISEULT  
(*aside to TRISTRAM with misgivings*)

These threats of Mark against you quail my heart,  
And daunt my sore resentment at your wounds  
And slights of late! O Tristram, save thyself,  
And think no more of me!

TRISTRAM

Forget you—never!  
(*Softly*) Rather the sunflower may forget the sun!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

(*To DAMSEL*) Wimple your face anew, wench: go  
unseen;  
Re-seal the sheet, which I care not to con,  
And send it on as bid.

[*Exit DAMSEL.*

## SCENE XXI

QUEEN ISEULT, TRISTRAM, KING MARK, SIR ANDRET,  
AND CHANTERS

TRISTRAM

Sure, Mark was drunk  
When writing such! Late he fed heavily,  
And has, I judge, roved out with his boon knightage  
Till evenfall shall bring him in to roost.

Q. ISEULT

I wonder! . . . (*nestling closer*) I've forebodings,  
Tristram dear;  
But, your death's mine, Love!

TRISTRAM

And yours mine, Sweet Heart! . . .  
—Now that the hall is lulled, and none seems near,  
I'll keep up my old minstrel character  
And sing to you, ere I by stealth depart  
To wait an hour more opportune for love.—  
I could, an if I would, sing jeeringly  
Of the King; I mean the song Sir Dinadan  
Made up about him. He was mighty wroth  
To hear it.

Q. ISEULT

Nay, Love; sadness suits you best. . . .  
Sad, sad are we: we will not jeer at him:

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Such darkness overdraws us, it may whelm  
Us even with him my master! Sing of love.

(TRISTRAM *harps a prelude.*)

I hope he may not heel back home and hear!

TRISTRAM (*singing and playing*)

### I

Yea, Love, true is it sadness suits me best!  
Sad, sad we are; sad, sad shall ever be.  
What shall deliver us from Love's unrest,  
And bonds we did not forecast, did not see!

### II

If, Love, the night fall on us, dark of hope,  
Let us be true, whatever else may be;  
Let us be strong, and without waver cope  
With heavy dooms, dooms we could not foresee!

Q. ISEULT

Yea, who will dole us, in these chains that chafe,  
Bare pity!—O were ye my King—not he!

(*She weeps, and he embraces her awhile. Scene darkens.*)

TRISTRAM (*thoughtfully*)

Where is King Mark? I must be soon away!

(*Scene darkens more.*)

KING MARK, *having drawn his dagger, creeps up behind TRISTRAM.*

K. MARK (*in a thick voice*)

He's in his own house, where he ought to be,  
Aye, here! where thou'l be not much longer, man!

## THE FAMOUS TRAGEDY OF

*He runs TRISTRAM through the back with his dagger. QUEEN ISEULT shrieks. TRISTRAM falls, QUEEN ISEULT sinking down by him with clasped hands. SIR ANDRET descends quickly from the Gallery. Sea heard without. Attendants enter and surround the Queen and Tristram.*

TRISTRAM (*weakly*)

From you!—against whom never have I sinned  
But under sorcery unwittingly,  
By draining deep the love-compelling vial  
In my sick thirst, as innocently did she! . . .

(*Turning to Q. ISEULT*)

My one clear light, my lady and my all,  
Faithful to death and dim infinity . . . (*Kisses her.*)

(*Turning again to K. MARK*)

This, when of late you sent for me, before  
I went to Brittany, to come and help you!  
“Fair nephew,” said you, “here upswarm our foes;  
They are stark at hand, and must be strongly met  
Sans tarriance, or they’ll uproot my realm.”  
“My power,” said I, “is all at your command.”  
I came. I neared in night-time to the gate,  
Where the hot host of Sessoines clung encamped;  
Killed them at th’entrance, and got in to you,  
Who welcomed me with joy. I forth’d again,  
Again slew more, and saved the stronghold’s fame!  
Yet you (*weaker*) requite me thus! You might—  
have fought me!

(*K. MARK droops his head in silence.*)

SIR ANDRET

O fie upon thee, traitor, pleading thus!  
It profits naught. To-day here sees thee die!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

### TRISTRAM

O Andret, Andret ; this from thee to me—  
Thee, whom I onetime held my fastest friend ;  
Wert thou as I, I would not treat thee so !

(SIR ANDRET turns aside and looks down.)  
(Weaker.) Fair Knights, bethink ye what I've done  
for Cornwall,—

Its fate was on my shoulder—and I saved it!—  
Yea, thick in jeopardies I've thrust myself  
To fame your knighthood!—daily stretched my arm  
For—the weal—of you—all ! [TRISTRAM dies.

### Q. ISEULT

(springing up, the King standing dazed)

O murderer, husband called!—possest of me  
Against my nature and my pleading tears,  
When all my heart was Tristram's—his past wording,  
To your own knowledge. Now this mute red mouth  
You've gored in my Belovéd, bids me act :  
Act do I then. So out you—follow him !

*She snatches KING MARK's dagger from his belt and  
stabs him with it. KING MARK falls and dies.*

### Q. ISEULT

Thus. Done ! My last deed—save my very last—  
To null myself, as if I never had been ! . . .  
) living years, what sharp entrancements, tears,  
Are yours—who are yet but Death with Tristram gone.  
—I have lived ! I have loved ! O I have loved indeed :  
Not Heaven itself could size my vast of love !

(She rushes out.)

SIR ANDRET, stooping and finding the King dead,  
follows after the Queen. A few moments' pause  
during which the sea and sky darken yet more,  
and the wind rises, distant thunder murmuring.  
Torches are moving about in the shadows  
at the back of the scene. Enter WATCHMAN ;  
next BRANGWAIN.

## SCENE XXII

WATCHMAN AND CHANTERS, WITH THE DEAD KING  
AND TRISTRAM; THEN BRANGWAIN

WATCHMAN

She's glode off like a ghost, with deathly mien;  
It seems toward the sea—yes, she—the Queen!

*They turn and look. QUEEN ISEULT's form is seen  
in the gloom to be mounting the parapet.  
Standing on it she turns, and waves her arm  
towards the Castle, as though bidding it fare-  
well. She then faces the Atlantic, and leaps  
over. A cry of dismay comes from all.*

BRANGWAIN (*entering hurriedly*)

She's swallowed up, and Tristram's brachet with  
her! . . .  
What have we here? . . . Sir Tristram's body? O!

CHANTERS: MEN

(BRANGWAIN *standing and gradually drooping during  
their chant*)

Alas, for this wroth day!  
She's leapt the ledge and fallen  
    Into the loud black bay,  
Whose waters, loosed and swollen,  
    Are spirting into spray!

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

She's vanished from the world,  
Over the blind rock hurled;  
And the little hound her friend  
Has made with her its end!

### CHANTERS: WOMEN

Alas, for this wroth day!  
Our Tristram, noble knight,  
A match for Arthur's might,  
Lies here as quaking clay.  
This is no falsehood fell,  
But very truth indeed  
That we too surely read!  
Would that we had to tell  
But pleasant truth alway!

### BRANGWAIN

*(arousing and gazing round in the semi-darkness)*

Here's more of this same stuff of death. Look down—  
What see I lying there? King Mark, too, slain?  
The sea's dark noise last night, the sky's vast yawn  
Of hollow bloodshot cloud, meant murder, then,  
As I divined!

*Enter ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED, Queen's Ladies,  
Retainers, Bowerwomen, and others.*

## SCENE XXIII

ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED, BRANGWAIN,  
QUEEN'S LADIES, ETC., AND CHANTERS

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

I heard her cry. I saw her leap! How fair  
She was! What wonder that my brother Kay  
Should pine for love of her. . . . O she should not  
Have done it to herself! Nor life nor death  
Is worth a special quest.

(*She sees TRISTRAM's body.*)

What's this—my husband?  
My Tristram dead likewise? *He* one with *her*?

(*She sinks and clasps TRISTRAM.*)

CHANTERS: M. AND W.

Slain by King Mark unseen, in evil vow,  
Who never loved him! Pierced in the back—aye, now,  
By sleight no codes of chivalry allow!

ISEULT THE WHITE H.

And she beholding! *That* the cause wherefor  
She went and took her life? He was not hers. . . .  
Yet did she love him true, if wickedly!

*Re-enter SIR ANDRET, with other Knights, Squires,  
Herald, etc.*

## SCENE XXIV

ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED, BRANGWAIN, SIR ANDRET,  
ETC., AND CHANTERS

SIR ANDRET (*saturninely*)

Nor sight nor sound of her! A Queen. 'Od's blood,  
Her flaws in life get mended by her death,  
And she and Tristram sport re-burnished fames!

ISEULT THE WHITE H. (*regarding MARK's body*)

And the King also dead. My Tristram's slayer.  
Yet strange to me. Then even had I not come  
Across the southern water recklessly  
This would have shaped the same—the very same.

(*Turning again to TRISTRAM*)  
Tristram, dear husband! O! . . .

(*She rocks herself over him.*)  
What a rare beauteous knight has perished here  
By this most cruel craft! Could not King Mark,  
If wronged, have chid him—minded him of me,  
And not done this, done this! Well, well; she's lost  
him,

Even as have I.—This stronghold moans with woes,  
And jibbering voices join with winds and waves  
To make a dolorous din! . . .

(*They lift her.*)

Aye, I will rise—  
Betake me to my own dear Brittany—  
Dearer in that our days there were so sweet,

## THE QUEEN OF CORNWALL

Before I knew what pended me elsewhere!  
These halls are hateful to me! May my eyes  
Meet them no more!

*(She turns to go.)*

## BRANGWAIN

I will attend you, Madam.

*[Exit ISEULT THE WHITEHANDED, assisted by BRANGWAIN and Bowerwomen. Knights, Retainers, etc., lift the bodies and carry them out. A Dirge by the Chanters.*

## EPILOGUE

### *Re-enter MERLIN*

Thus from the past, the throes and themes  
Whereof I spake—now dead as dreams—  
Have been re-shaped and drawn  
In feinted deed and word, as though  
Our shadowy and phantasmal show  
Were very movements to and fro  
Of forms so far-off gone.

These warriors and dear women, whom  
I've called, as bidden, from the tomb,  
May not have failed to raise  
An antique spell at moments here?  
—They were, in their long-faded sphere,  
As you are now who muse thereat;  
Their mirth, crimes, fear and love begat  
Your own, though thwart their ways;  
And may some pleasant thoughts outshape  
From this my conjuring to undrape  
Such ghosts of distant days!

Begin 1916: resumed and finished 1923.











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